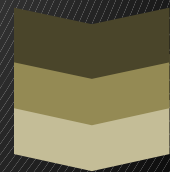# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION A ASSIGNMENT ONE

BY

CHIRAAG DOWLEY

UNISA

ASSIGNMENT 1

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STUDENT NUMBER 47514124

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INTRODUCTION

 The aim of this assignment is to provide a discussion of the topics: Special schools as a great resource to neighbouring schools; The advantages of curriculum adaptation in a classroom; Addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a low vision learner, The education support structure and it's relationship at various levels, and Inclusive Principals respectively. I have discussed each topic in a separate essay, and I have provided a general overview of points discussed at the end of each essay.

Special Schools, a great resource to Neighbouring Schools

Special schools function as an integrated part of the district-based support team, hence, they have tremendous expertise such as professional special eduction teachers and resources invested within them which prove extremely advantageous to schools which may not have these resources. As such, special schools serve a cardinal role in the provision of resources, expertise, sharing of skills and mentorship to neighbourhood schools.

To understand the relationship between special schools and neighbouring schools, and the ways in which neighbouring schools benefit from this relationship, this essay will seek to examine the many advantages and benefits of special schools to neighbourhood schools.

The resources of special schools are integrated into the district-based support team so that they can provide specialized professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbourhood schools. Special schools can guide neighbourhood schools on translating the Revised National Curriculum Statement learning programme guidelines into action on learners who require high, moderate and low levels of support to overcome behavioural, audial, intellectual, linguistic, visual and other barriers in learning. For instance, some learners in neighbourhood schools experience difficulties in school, ranging from problems with concentration, learning, language, and perception to problems with behaviour. Special schools can provide specialised support to these learners with adapted and differentiated assessment and instructional methods to accommodate learners who ordinarily could not achieve their potential in these neighbourhood schools and who struggle to follow the required pace and pitch of the curriculum. More precisely, special schools will provide curriculum support, including assessment, specialised teaching methodologies and the use of specialised equipment to educators and learners in neighbourhood schools, who have to meet the needs of learners with disabilities such as blindness. Neighbourhood schools will benefit immensely from these resources as neighbourhood schools have only limited resources. For example, special schools can provide neighbourhood schools with overhead projectors which can be used in a classroom to assist a learner with low vision or strategies to teach a learner with ADHD.

Special schools provide assistive technological resources to neighbourhood schools. Neighbourhood schools may not have advanced assistive technology for learners with impairments, as such, special schools would fill in the gap by providing assistive technological resources to neighbourhood schools. In so doing, the shared resources of special schools will be able to provide improved support for more pupils through a shared use of resources and expertise with less emphasis on paperwork and bureaucracy. Moreover, learners of neighbourhood schools may need help to access subject matter, physically gain access to the school, or meet their unique needs which special schools can take on the responsibility of meeting. Special schools can make their resources available to learners of neighbourhood schools,

for example, they can provide soft play areas, sensory rooms, or swimming pools, which are necessary for treating students with certain conditions or they may loan wheelchairs to neighbourhood schools. Assistive technology will help to level the playing field to allow both able learners and physically challenged learners to succeed in the "mainstream" world, creating normalacy and preserving self-esteem. For example, Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) communication books can be provided by special schools to learners with autism in neighbourhood schools. This assistive technology will help a learner with autism enhance their verbal output and language skills.

Another significant way in which special schools benefit neighbourhood schools is by the implementation of the strategy on screening learners in neighbourhood schools, identifying their level of learning intensity and the kind of support they will need to help with those learning barriers. Special schools will then determine if these learners should be moved to a full-service or special school for a short period of time. For example, Special schools could implement screening strategies for spectrum disorders in learners of neighbourhood schools using a general screening tool followed by an ASD- specific screening tool for those who screen positive on the former or by using an ASD- specific tool for all children.

Special schools may help to sharpen the focus on inclusive learning within neighbourhood schools. Through continued collaborative practice by working together with special schools, neighbourhood schools can build a collaborative network, connecting colleagues and diverse professionals, interchanging knowledge which will serve as an opportunity to advance the school as a change factor that promotes dialogue and participation, making possible inclusive practices through an education of quality for all without exception. Effectively this suggests that special schools will become involved in district programmes to promote more effective transition from school-to-work for learners in neighbourhood schools. Special schools can establish links with the department of Labour to make available learnerships, job placements and support employment programmes for learners in neighbourhood schools. For example, the department of Labour can place a learner with special needs in a learnership program whereby the learnership program will help the learner to gain the necessary skills and workplace experience that will open up better employment or self employment opportunities. Furthermore, Special schools work collaboratively with other sectors including Health, Social Development (Welfare), Labour, Justice, Correctional Services, Transport, Safety and Security departments to develop a network of support to neighbourhood schools. Special schools gather and draw on as much expertise as possible from various sectors, the community, parents and professionals in order to provide quality and legitimate support. For example, special schools may liaise with psychologists and other mental health professionals to offer psycho education which is the education offered to individuals with a mental health condition and their families to help empower them and deal with their condition in an optimal way.

Having established that, Special schools will develop life skills programmes in neighbourhood schools, which will make learners who experience barriers to learning less vulnerable to abuse. Special schools will observe the trends which are common in a school, for example, learners with low vision are often teased because of mannerisms like head banging. Some learners may even take advantage of a learner with partial sight and kick them from the back or hide their things. Special schools will take into account all these factors and implement life skills programmes aimed at combating these issues.

Special schools will play a role in the professional development of educators in neighbouring schools, which can be done by formal and informal means of helping teachers not only learn new skills but also develop new insights into pedagogy and their own practice, and explore new or advanced understandings of content and resources. For example, special schools could train teachers of neighbourhood schools how to recognise "at risk" learners and what signs to look out for. One way in which this can be done is by Special schools assisting full service and neighbouring schools to develop inclusive pedagogy which is a method of teaching that incorporates dynamic practices and learning styles, multicultural content, and varied means of assessment. These dynamic inclusive practices will promote student academic success, as well as social, cultural, and physical well-being. For example, in a classroom with a diversity of races and cultures, a teacher can make use of passages and texts speaking of different cultures; The Indlamu of the Zulu culture, MahaShivarathri of Hinduism, Eid-ul-Fitr of Islam and so on. Moreover, Special schools, as part of the district-based support team, coordinate and organise professional development activities for educators, school management and other staff in neighbourhood schools. Special schools may help neighbourhood teachers identify areas which need improvement and then work through the steps required to carry it out, for example, by implementing curriculum, conducting research, holding workshops and establishing new lines of communication among staff. By engaging in such group processes as consensus building, vision building and conflict resolution, special school teacher trainers model ways for neighbourhood teachers and administrators to develop and hone their collaboration skills.

Special schools will serve a more purposeful role for the staff of neighbourhood schools by advising neighbourhood colleagues. Special schools will acquire an esteemed role in society, as their knowledge, expertise and skills will be put to good use and they will be able to extend a helping hand which is more far reaching than only being able to help learners from the special schools in which they teach. For example, instead of providing support and services only to their learners, special schools, with their knowledge and expertise on learning barriers, disabilities and special needs, have skills which will be applied to a wider range of students and not just their own, thus their skills will be put to maximum use. In so doing, special schools serve as a mentor to neighbouring schools by providing neighbourhood schools with information, support, feedback and assistance for the purpose of refining present skills, developing new ones and enhancing problem solving and decision making in a way that promotes professional development. For example, special schools may provide constructive feedback on the way in which teachers of neighbourhood schools conduct their lessons. They may suggest using more culturally sensitive terms or engaging all learners instead of just a few.

Effectively this suggest that staff from neighbouring schools can draw on the skills, knowledge and expertise of staff and resources of Special schools. Special educators have a tremendous amount of expertise to share, especially with regard to individualizing instruction for students with specific kinds of disabilities. Special school staff could train teachers of neighbourhood schools to utilize explicit instruction, mnemonic instruction and graphic organisers. For example, a special school teacher may train a neighbourhood teacher on teaching strategies for a learner with low vision by making use of explicit and descriptive instruction. Instead of using vague terms like "here" and "there", terms like "to the left side of your desk" or "underneath Conrad's chair" should be used instead.

Similarly, special schools can train neighbourhood teachers on providing clarity and relevance within different contexts. Special schools could train neighbourhood teachers on how to teach in different contexts, ensuring that when they explain, for example, what an antelope is, giving a blind learner a miniature, plastic antelope to touch will not be relevant. Special schools could also train neighbourhood school teachers on how to teach learners with autism. Autistic learners are concrete learners, so when explaining that it is raining heavily, a teacher cannot say that "It's raining cats and dogs" because the learner will take the phrase literally. Instead of yelling at an autistic learner, "hold your horses!", say "calm down" instead.

In addition to drawing on the skills and expertise of special school teachers, due to the human resources invested within special schools, special schools could train teachers regarding barriers to learning and how to manage inclusive classrooms. Many teachers in neighbouring schools lack training to deal with learners experiencing emotional, behavioural and learning barriers as such, special schools could train teachers to change their attitude towards learners who experience barriers to learning. For example, teachers can be trained to view those who do not fit into existing arrangements as offering 'surprises'; that is, opportunities that invite further inventiveness. This implies a more positive view of differences.

Finally, Special schools can train neighbourhood teachers in the development of learner support material and assistive devices. Special schools could assist these teachers with locally made learning/teaching materials that can enhance the quality of the learning/teaching process. For example, teaching material consisting of notes giving information on time required for an activity to be completed by a learner with a visual barrier, resources needed, class organisation suggested, unit outcomes, unit activity outline and activity solutions. Teachers of neighbourhood schools can use teacher/learner support material to supplement or replace a traditional textbook.

In conclusion, special schools as resource centres will provide improved educational services to neighbourhood schools. Most importantly, special schools will be integrated into the district based support team so that they can provide specialised professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to the designated neighbourhood schools. Neighbourhood schools and their learners will benefit immensely from the resources of special schools, given the array of specialised resources and expertise support provided to them.

OVERVIEW OF POINTS DISCUSSED

➢ Identifying students who are blind or visually impaired and establishing eligibility and the type of visual impairment, is the first step in meeting the students needs.

➢

➢ I will take into consideration that it is sometimes not possible to identify a learner with low vision from the appearance of their eyes, and this would prompt me to carefully observe their behaviour within the classroom.

➢

➢ Making use of careful observation, I will try to identify complaints of behavioural and appearance signs the learner may have, taking into consideration what they can and cannot see.

➢

➢ Addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a learner who has low vision cannot be done without a sound knowledge of these learners and their eye defects.

➢

➢ I will approach the learner's parents for information on the developmental history of their child's visual impairment

➢

➢ I will consult the Institutional Level Support Team.

➢

➢ I will consult relevant policies from the Department of Education, for example Education White Paper 6

➢

➢ I would expect the learner with low vision to perform and provide them with the tools they need, which will encourage them do their work with speed and competency equal to any other child.

➢

➢ My approach to dealing with a learner with low vision would be highly individualistic and unique. In addressing a visual barrier experienced by a learner with low vision, I will adopt the Person centered approach

➢

➢ I will accentuate my learner's strengths to their fellow classmates and friends would allow these learners to appreciate them despite their impairment.

➢

➢ Attitude makes a huge difference in the acceptance of non visual techniques and in a learners confidence and self-esteem.

➢

➢ If a learner's vision is not sufficient for a task, there's always other ways the task can be done

➢

➢ I will guard against allowing my learner to become too reliant on me or other students.

➢

➢ I will use the same form of discipline for students with visual impairments as I would for any other student.

➢

➢ I will attend to aspects such as sound, best seating places and lighting

-
- I will allow the learner some flexibility to experiment so he/she can find out what works best for him/her.
-
- Learners with low vision often require text materials in large print and/or high contrast, which makes the text easier to read.
-
- I would adapt my teaching strategies. I will verbalize everything I teach.
-
- I will stand close to the low vision student and over-verbalize when doing a demonstration, making use of explicit language.
-
- I will use descriptive verbal instruction.
-
- I will adapt (not exclude learners) assignments or work which I think may be a challenging for a learner with low vision.
-
- I will keep in mind that my learner may need more time to complete tasks, tests and exams.
-
- I will teach the learner with low vision to make use of auditory memory by developing their ability to listen, localize and distinguish between sounds in the environment and to estimate the distance between themselves and these sounds.
-
- I will provide my learner with information, take them to objects they can touch and, at the same time, explain them to the learner with low vision, ensuring they understand.
-
- I will teach my learner to gain concrete experience of the words they hear.
-
- I will actively encourage tactile exploration.
-
- I will make my learner aware of smell and texture
-
- I will teach my learner to make use of their laterality and directionality skills
-
-
-

The advantages of an adapted curriculum in the classroom

There are various barriers which may exist within a classroom. For example, visual barriers, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy and so on. These barriers serve as hindrances to these learners who find a curriculum which isn't tailored to meet their specific needs, difficult to comprehend, as such, these learners are often excluded from the learning system altogether. However, a flexible curriculum which takes cognisance of all learners,

irrespective of their learning needs, is paramount to the acceptance and accommodation of diversity within the classroom. In other words, all learners, even learners with impairments, are accommodated by the use of an adapted curriculum. This essay seeks to discuss the positive impact curriculum adaptation has within the classroom.

Curriculum adaptation accommodates diversity. An adapted curriculum will ensure that diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning – are learning a curriculum that reach them as individual learners. For example, a learner from a disadvantaged background, may feel uncomfortable and confused when academic texts make reference to things he does not have access to, let alone know what they are, like RollsRoyce or Ferero Rocher. An adapted curriculum, on the other hand, will be sensitive to a diversity of students. An important aspect of the curriculum is that it should be relevant to the lives of students and should reflect their images as well as their natural experiences. The content, therefore, should reflect everyday aspects of living and the daily experiences of students. This will sometimes create a necessity for teachers to select illustrations, create analogies, or relate allegories that will connect new information to the experiences of the students. To do an effective job in this area, teachers will need to develop their knowledge about the socio-cultural backgrounds of their students.

Additionally, curriculum adaptation helps teachers to differentiate and accommodate the ability of learners. An adapted curriculum allows teachers to differentiate tasks for pupils of different abilities or include open-ended tasks and allowing pupil response at different levels. This will be sensitive to all learners and their capabilities. For example, an adapted curriculum may use tiered activities through which all learners work with the same important understandings and skills, but proceed with different levels of support, challenge, or complexity, give learners options of how to express required learning (e.g., create a puppet show, write a letter, or develop a mural with labels) or use rubrics that match and extend students' varied skill levels. In so doing, differentiated instruction increases student engagement. One of the most important principles of inclusive education is that no two learners are alike, and so inclusive schools place great importance on creating opportunities for students to learn and be assessed in a variety of ways. Certainly this enhances the way in which teachers provide support and accommodation for learners with disabilities, but it also diversifies the educational experience of all learners. For example, use of multicultural terms, "Ubuntu", "Namaste", "Quran", "mooi werk", will create an interesting climate for the students.

Curriculum adaptation impacts learner persistence. When the learners perceive that they are not as able as other learners, they are less likely to persevere in their studies. For example, persistence in a learner is evidenced by willingness to continue to try in the face of a challenging math problem. For students, this persistence can be a driving force to help them achieve their academic, as well as personal goals.

Curriculum adaptation is a learner centred approach. Traditionally the curriculum focused on what to teach, and not on what the students were learning. This emphasis on what
teachers should do, often leads to students who are passive learners and who did not take responsibility for their own learning. This is known as "instructor - centered teaching." In contrast, "learner- centred teaching" occurs when the curriculum focuses on student learning. A learner-centred curriculum will build a strong knowledge foundation and help to develop learning skills and learner self-awareness and assessment shifts from only assigning grades to include

constructive feedback and to assist with improvement. The acquisition of a strong knowledge base will be obtainable by most learners due to a curriculum which they understand and this, in turn, will create equal opportunities for a learner to obtain access, results, benefits and levels of achievement as other learners because the leaner is better able to relate, reflect and understand what is being taught to them. Therefore making available opportunities which were previously unknown to the learner because of the use of a curriculum which was not sensitive to individual abilities. For instance, expectations of higher enrollment of students with disabilities have prompted academic institutes to introduce innovative programs to meet these students' needs. Thus, Curriculum adaptations lead to new educational possibilities. This rings true especially for learners who were previously excluded from an education system befitting their learning needs. Therefore, higher education is a realistic pursuit for many students. Special programs have been opened for students with visual impairments and students with learning disabilities.

Adapting the curriculum has been an effective way to create more accessible learning environments to support all students and their teachers in various educational contexts. For example, ramped entrances and walkways for learners in wheelchairs will allow easy accessibility to school and during outdoor lessons learners will be able to travel quickly and efficiently.

A curriculum tailored to suit the learning needs of all learners will allow them to thrive academically, and this academic progress will create feelings of pride and accomplishment within the learner. Academic progress will serve as reinforcement for the learner to strive for greater achievement, will broaden the horizon of their perception of their abilities to do things and this, in turn, will create a sense of accomplishment within the learner. For example, if the learner regularly scores high marks on classroom activities; a comprehension exercise or a math exercise, the learner will feel a sense of accomplishment and will feel that it is possible to excel academically despite their impairment. Accomplishment in turn, creates a sense of eagerness and willingness to learn, thus the learner would be more attentive during lessons. Learners believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. This view creates a love for learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. For example, a learner who understands and performs just as well as his peers on a subject such as Natural Science, will be eager and willing to learn in order to maintain his good results. As a

As a result of accomplishment, curriculum adaptation impacts learners persistence. When the learners perceive that they are not as able as other learners, they are less likely to persevere in their studies. For example, persistence in a learner is evidenced by a willingness to continue to try in the face of a challenging math problem. For students, this persistence can be a driving force to help them achieve their academic, as well as personal goals. Furthermore, curriculum adaptation regulates the circulation and construction of knowledge. An adapted curriculum contributes to an inclusive climate where all learners are more likely to volunteer

different perspectives and thus enrich discussions; conversely, if some students or groups feel that their contributions are not as valued as those of others, they will withdraw from the conversation. For example, use of questions sensitive to the diverse qualities of students of different races or students who have disabilities, will encourage input from these children. A teacher may tell a story in which Sipho, Priya, Fathima and Sam (who is physically disabled) are best friends, and visit each other's homes to learn about the different customs and traditions.

In addition to regulating the circulation and construction of knowledge, curriculum adaptation impacts meta-curricular and citizenship skills. The use of curriculum adaptation in a classroom allows learners to learn to work in groups with students different from them in ways that facilitate the development of skills such as leadership, communication, and conflict resolution. At the opposite end of the spectrum, non-inclusive learning environments with a curriculum which is exclusive, facilitates the perpetuation of stereotypes about students from other groups. For example, in a group activity, a teacher may include a mixture of learners with different skills and abilities. Zanele has good leadership qualities, Samiksha is an excellent writer, Ronald communicates very well and Imraan is good at conflict resolution.

A curriculum befitting and serving all learners learning needs, is more far-reaching and comprehensible to a larger number of students, than a curriculum which does not accommodate unique learning needs. Thus, curriculum adaptation within the classroom will be accessible to more students because it includes inclusive teaching strategies, which are those teaching techniques that enable all students to learn and engage with the curriculum in the classroom. Teachers will use a variety of teaching strategies across all curriculum areas to meet the wide range of learners needs. For example, in a racially diverse classroom, a teacher can incorporate multicultural examples, materials, stories in schoolwork, activities, assignments. In a classroom activity, a teacher can make two groups assigned with different sets of cultural rules to role play, and then work out ways to communicate and solve tasks using their different cultural norms. Accordingly, an adapted curriculum will include Inclusive teaching which open possibilities for new and exciting ways to teach. For example, when reviewing how to describe a diagram to a blind student, it might become apparent that there is a better way to present the information for all students. In making teaching inclusive, the teacher reassess the material they use in their teaching and the way in which it is delivered and assessed. For example, when teaching students Afrikaans voegwoorde, a teacher may find a mneumonic useful, *"and my dog went off and bit goofy very hard"*
(en maar dog want of...a-anders, n-nietemin, d-derhalwe, b-buitendien, i-indien, t-tog, g-gevolglik, o-omdat, o-of....of...)

Curriculum adaptation allows students with disabilities to participate in inclusive environments by compensating for learner's weaknesses. Changes are made in the educational environment that allow learners with disabilities to participate in inclusive environment s by compensating for learners' weaknesses. For example, learners with mobility impairments may need wheelchairs, self-propelled walkers, or recreational vehicles like bikes or scooters.

Finally, an adapted curriculum makes effective use of a school's resources. In the past, special

education often involved the segregation of students with disabilities for the purpose of specialized instruction. Not only does that model of special education in a separate setting deprive students with disabilities of interaction with their peers and full access to the curriculum, it can also involve duplicate systems and resources by maximising the availability of staff and materials for all students. For example, overhead projectors and lamps will be put to use in classrooms with learners who have low vision.

To summarise, curriculum adaptation consists of potential benefits for not only the learners who need special support but also other learners who learn in the same learning environment at any age levels. For instance, general education learners may benefit from an adapted curriculum designed for the learners with behavioral problems in general classroom settings. Through the increased positive behavior and learning productivity of those learners, other learners in the same classroom may receive a more optimal learning environment and opportunities for mutual understandings and more interactions. In another situation, integrating learner's linguistic and cultural needs may provide other learners with the opportunity to learn new language and cultures and may increase their multicultural awareness and mutual respect. In short, when individual learners in a classroom benefit from curriculum adaptation, there is a great possibility that other learners receive benefits as well.

OVERVIEW OF POINTS DISCUSSED

➢ Curriculum adaptation accommodates diversity.

➢ Curriculum adaptation helps teachers to differentiate and accommodate the ability of learners.

➢ Differentiated instruction increases student engagement.

➢ An adapted curriculum and assessment, that offers a range and choice of methods, is more inclusive.

➢ An adapted curriculum is in accordance with the learner ability.

➢ A rigid curriculum is unyielding

➢ Curriculum adaptation is a learner centred approach.

➢ An adapted curriculum creates equal opportunities for a learner to obtain access, results, benefits and levels of achievement as other learners because the leaner is better able to relate, reflect and understand what is being taught to them.

➢ Curriculum adaptations lead to new educational possibilities.

➢ Adapting the curriculum has been an effective way to create more accessible learning environments to support all students and their teachers in various educational contexts.

➢ A curriculum tailored to suit the learning needs of all learners will allow them to thrive academically, and this academic progress will create feelings of pride and accomplishment within the learner.

➢ Accomplishment creates a sense of eagerness and willingness to learn, thus the learner would be more attentive during lessons.

➢ Curriculum adaptation impacts learner persistence.

➢ Curriculum adaptation regulates the circulation and construction of knowledge.

➢ Curriculum adaptation impacts meta-curricular and citizenship skills.

➢ A curriculum befitting and serving all learners learning needs, is more far-reaching and comprehensible to a larger number of students, than a curriculum which does not accommodate unique learning needs.

➢ An adapted curriculum will include Inclusive teaching which open possibilities for new and exciting ways to teach.

➢ Curriculum adaptation allows students with disabilities to participate in inclusive environments by compensating for learner's weaknesses.

➢ An adapted curriculum makes effective use of a school's resources.

Addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a learner with low vision

Not all learners are the same; each one of them are unique individuals with a diversity of needs and differences. Be it a difference which is explicitly obvious or less noticeable, a seemingly insignificant oddity such as a lisp, or an impairment such as low vision. It is the duty of myself, the teacher, to discern where this difference lies. For this reason, I, as a teacher acknowledge that I should be aufait with the miscellany of student related issues and barriers I can

expect to be confronted with, as such, I should be adequately equipped to deal with such matters appropriately. In this paper, I will seek to discuss the ways in which I will support a learner with low vision.

Learners with visual impairments are often unaware of their impairment. This unawareness could continue for many years before the learner realizes that their eyesight is not 20/20. This means that it is crucial for teachers to be able to identify which learners in their classroom have a form of visual impairment, and the severity of the impairment. It follows from this that the first step I would take in supporting a learner with low vision, is to identify students who are blind or visually impaired. I will thereafter refer the learner to an optometrist, opthalmologist, optician or low vision specialist to determine their visual acuity and to establish eligibility and the type of visual impairment the learner may have.

The identification of eligibility and the type of impairment will be followed by a thorough assessment to determine the students unique visual needs. Secondly, I will take into consideration that it is sometimes not possible to identify a learner with low vision from the appearance of their eyes, and this would prompt me to carefully observe their behaviour within the classroom. For instance, a learner who is always leaving their seat to view writing on the white board which other learners have no trouble reading within their seating arrangements. Making use of careful observation, I will try to identify complaints of behavioural and appearance signs the learner may exhibit , taking into careful consideration what they can and cannot see. I will take note if the child is squinting or unable to read words on the board, I will watch how the child is performing in gym and other tasks that require hand to eye coordination. I will ensure that the child is writing the proper shape of letters in order to determine whether the child has dyslexia instead. If the student is quiet, it may mean that they are shy, but could also be because they are unaware of what is being discussed. I will be observant and noteful of all cues which point to the possibility of my learner having low vision. For example, a learner who rubs his/her eyes excessively, a learner who has inflamed, watery eyes or a learner who complains of double or blurred vision.

It is important to recognise that addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a learner who has low vision cannot be done without a sound knowledge of these learners and their eye defects. Therefore, as a teacher of a learner with low vision, it is a cardinal responsibility to gain a sufficient knowledge base on the particular eye condition of my learner. I will go about this by first approaching and communicating with the learner's parents, since it is the learner's parents who are most authoritative on their child and the learner's parents could provide

information regarding the developmental history of the visual impairment. Vision is the primary sense upon which most education strategies are based. These strategies must be modified to reflect the learner's visual, auditory and tactile/vision capabilities. A learner with a severe visual loss can directly experience only what is within arm's reach and can be safely touched, and in most cases, what can be heard. Thus, to ensure that appropriate education is administered to learners with low vision, it will vitally important to consult the learner's parents to provide more information on their child's visual impairment. For example, could the learner's low vision be due to Coloboma, a birth defect occurring during the development of the foetus? The result of coloboma is underdevelopment, which results in a cleft in the pupil, iris, ciliary body, lens, retina, choroid or optic nerve. Could the learner's low vision be due to Macular Degeneration, the gradual loss of sensitivity of the central portion of the retina, associated with the loss of central vision and the ability to see fine detail or Nystagmus, the involuntary movement of the eyes resulting in the inability to maintain a steady fixation.

Having examined the initial steps in addressing the challenge of a visual barrier experienced by the learner, it is now necessary to consider the proactive steps which I will take in addressing the learner's visual impairment and which will directly benefit the learner. In order to meet the individual and disability specific needs of students with low vision, there must be a full array of program options and services. Educational needs that are specific to these learners must be addressed throughout their school experience. In order to meet the unique, individual needs of learners , I will consult the relevant support structures concerned with delivering specialised services to learners. Firstly, I will consult the Institutional Level Support Team. The Institutional Support Team is trained to develop strategies and Individualised Education Programmes to address the needs and barriers of learners with low vision to learning. The Institutional Support Team will equip me with the skills to identify the visual barrier in my learner, how to address the barrier and the skill to grade tasks to provide for mastery and achievement of the learner, regardless of their level of ability. Institutional Level support t eams will put in place properly co-ordinated learner and teacher support services to support the learning and teaching process at school level. For example, if my leaner has low vision and experiences difficulties in visual perception, the Institutional Support Team could compile an Individualised Education Programme (IEP) to support my learner's needs. This programme can include in-class support such as the use of a computer and computer-based educational programmes, tape aids and the use of additional materials in class.

Secondly, I will consult relevant policies from the Department of Education, for example Education White Paper 6. Education White Paper 6 indicates that assessment processes will address barriers to learning and current policies and practices will be reviewed and revised to ensure that the needs of all learners are acknowledged and addressed. For example, the learner

with low vision will receive a question paper in which the font size will be increased to Arial 16 on A4 paper and the diagrams will be enlarged and appear in an addendum. The original size diagram will still appear in the question paper to assist the learner.

To this point, the focus has been on the indirect steps of addressing the challenge of a visual impairment in a learner. However, it is important to recognise that addressing a visual impairment in a learner, is not solely an indirect approach, but also a holistic and "hands on task". I will therefore now consider the practical steps I will take in addressing the visual barrier in the learner.

It goes without saying that every individual has an innate yearning for acceptance, to be appreciated and to be acknowledged. It follows from this that every individual requires their differences to be celebrated instead of being thought of as a degenerative disability. Although students who are blind or who have low vision may do things differently, they are as capable of doing academic work as their peers. I would expect them to perform and provide them with the tools they need, which will encourage them do their work with speed and competency equal to any other child. Hence, my approach to dealing with a learner with low vision would be highly individualistic and unique. In addressing a visual barrier experienced by a learner with low vision, I will adopt the Person centred approach; increasing the learner's feelings of self worth, helping them become a fully functioning person and creating a climate of unconditional positive regard. I will do this by engaging with the learner with low vision, encouraging learners to engage with each other and include the learner with low vision in playground activities, games, or conversations. Accentuating my learner's strengths to their fellow classmates and friends would allow these learners to appreciate them despite their impairment. Of course, I would be impartial in giving attention, motivation and praise to all my learners, including the ones who do not have impairments.

Ultimately, it is the attitude of the teacher towards the learner who is visually impaired that has a hindering influence on their emotional and social development than the impairment itself. Attitude makes a huge difference in the acceptance of non visual techniques and in a learner's confidence and self-esteem. If a learner with low vision is allowed the opportunity, patience and the teacher demonstrates belief in the abilities of the learner, low vision is only a physical nuisance. If a learner's vision is not sufficient for a task, there are always other good techniques that they could use to get the job done. For example, if the learner with low vision is

struggling to differentiate the differences between the texture of feathers, fur and scales, rather than give in and tell him the differences myself, I will encourage and prompt him to think for himself. I will bear in mind that it is important to allow the visually impaired learner their independence, hence, I will guard against allowing my learner to become too reliant on me or other learners. For example, providing a scribe, such as the learner's friend or other classmates, to take notes for a visually impaired student could lead the learner to becoming dependent on others to do things for them.

I will use the same form of discipline for learners with visual impairments as I would for any other learner. All learners need to learn behaviours and actions that are acceptable in an effort to prepare them to be accepted by society. Accepting inappropriate behaviours and actions not only does not teach the student appropriate social skills, but sighted peers will sense that I am treating them differently. This may cause animosity between learners.

Learners with visual impairments have unique educational needs which are most effectively met using specialized services, books and materials in appropriate media (including braille), as well as specialised equipment and technology to assure equal access to the core and specialized curricula, and to enable them to most effectively compete with their peers in school and ultimately in society. It is essential to adopt a holistic approach when dealing with a learner with low vision. Meticulously and painstakingly attending to all potentially impeding aspects which may be a hindrance to the learner with low vision. I will attend to aspects such as sound, best seating places and lighting; ensuring that a classroom is well lit, whether artificially or naturally and ensuring that the learner has sufficient lighting in order to complete a specific task. Lighting can greatly, impacting a child's ability to see and participate in classroom activities. Lamps and lighting are often the key to improved reading. However, what works is very individual. Some learners find reading is easiest with very bright directional light illuminating the page. Other learners with an identical eye condition, however, prefer low levels of diffused light. I will take into consideration the preference of the type of light levels and adjustments the learner with low vision may need.

Having established that, another significant responsibility in accommodating a learner with low vision would require me to adapt my teaching strategies. In order to accommodate a learner with low vision, I would adapt my teaching strategies. Firstly, I will verbalize everything I teach. All of the learners will benefit if I read everything as I write it on the whiteboard or review it from a Power Point presentation or an overhead projector. When I call on learners for answers, I would not just point, I will say the names aloud. Secondly, when doing a demonstration, for

example, demonstrating how gears interlock to move an engine, I will stand close to the low vision learner and over-verbalize as I demonstrate, making use of explicit language and standing next to the learner and allowing them to get a close up of the demonstration. Thirdly, I will use descriptive verbal instruction. I will make use of descriptive words such as "straight", "forward", "left", etc in relation to the learner's body orientation. I will be specific in directions and avoid the use of vague terms with unusable information, such as "over there", "here", "this", etc.

In addition to adapting the vocal aspects of my teaching strategies, I will also adapt assignments or work which I think may be challenging for a learner with low vision. I will adapt the work, but not exclude the learner from the assignment entirely. For example, the use of regular print, as long as it is crisp, sharp, and with good contrast and no glare, in assignments for learners with low vision. Common white paper often reflects a significant glare, which can make the reading process more difficult. I will try covering the page with a transparent coloured plastic or an acetate sheet, available at stationary stores, to tone down the brightness. I will experiment to find the best colour for a student. Learner s with low vision often require text materials in large print and/or high contrast, which makes the text easier to read. I will make use of bold or regular print, that is crisp, sharp, and with good contrast and no glare. I will magnify the text so that it's larger, allow the learner to use hand-held magnifiers or a monocular. For learners with low vision who benefit from large print, I will consult the Institutional Level Support Team to provide a video magnifier (sometimes referred to as a CCTV,) which can be used by the learner to provide the best access to diagrams, graphs, maps, math, forms and other print material not stored on a computer. Material is placed on the moveable table under the camera and the image is magnified and displayed on the monitor. Additionally, I will keep in mind that my learner may need more time to complete tasks, tests and exams. Most visually impaired learners will require extra time in their exams because of a reduced speed of information processing which relates to their disability. I will base the amount of time requested on the learner's normal method of working in the classroom. For example, I will allow the learner with low vision time to read and process the questions and allow them extra time to complete the exam paper based on how much time they take on tests of the same duration and complexity in class.

It will be of great use to a partially sighted learner to make use of what vision they have. I will firstly teach the learner with low vision to make use of auditory memory by developing their ability to listen, localise and distinguish between sounds in the environment and to estimate the distance between themselves and these sounds. For example, I will tell them to listen to the different sounds which different species of birds make; the hadida makes a loud *"Caw Caw"* noise, pigeons make a cooing noise, sparrows chirp and so on. I will ask them to point out the

direction in which the chirping is coming from and how far away they think the bird is in relation to themselves. For instance, is the bird on the school gate a meter away from them or is the bird on the tree outside the school?

Secondly, I will provide my learner with information, take them to objects they can touch and, at the same time, explain to the learner with low vision, ensuring they understand. For example, I will introduce a new object to the learner, by holding the object , and placing the back of my hand under the learner's hand and then slowly rotating my hand until the learner is touching the object, at the same time. First asking them what they think they are touching and thereafter explaining to them what it is they are touching. I will encourage the learner to ask questions and think critically. More precisely, I will assist my learner to gain concrete experience of the words they hear. Learners who have low vision need to be provided with meaningful experiences and interaction with real objects that they can touch, hear, smell and see. For example, playing with a plastic animal has no meaning to the student who has not touched, smelled, heard and interacted with the real animal. In this connection, in order for my learner to gain concrete experience of animals, I will take my learners on a trip to the farm and allow the learner with low vision to interact with animals, touch and hold a rabbit, feel the different textures of fur, feathers and scales. I will actively encourage tactile exploration. Tactile clues help the learner verify what he or she may see only imperfectly or perhaps not at all. For example, I will allow the learner with low vision together with a classmate, to tactilely examine an African mask, placing their hands together as they explore the relatively smooth parts of the mask and find the leather strips, beads, and decorative feathers that border the mask. This way the learner has a joint focus and shares observations with a classmate.

 I will make my learner aware of smell and texture so that they will be able to identify and distinguish different colours during an Art lesson. For example, during creative art activities, I will incorporate materials to make the activities more tactual. I will add scents and textures to dough and paints. It will provide the learner with low vision with a means of self expression and

originality. Students can explore a variety of materials, textures and colours , and develop fine motor skills. Finally, I will teach my learner to make use of their laterality and directionality skills by means of tactile and auditory clues by teaching them to use their body as a point of departure to understand laterality and directionality. I will use directional words and landmarks in the playing area to direct a low vision student. For example, "*Walk to the door, turn toward the window using a quarter turn."* I will say what it is I am actually doing in body oriented language. For example, when teaching to hop, I will say *"Stand on your left foot, raise your right foot, and jump in the air on your left foot."*

In conclusion, learners with low vision need an educational system that meets their individual needs, fosters independence, and is measured by the success of each individual in the school and community. The teacher of a learner with a visual impairment is a central figure in the holistic and educational development of a learner with low vision. It is the teacher's duty to develop the strategies and tools that can help the low vision learner learn about the world, perform everyday activities, and participate in the general curriculum and other activities in school. The specific responsibilities of the teacher of learners with visual impairments may vary, depending on the learner's age and needs, the goals his educational team sets for him, the type of educational program the learner participates in, and the policies of the particular school district. Vision is fundamental to the learning process and is the primary basis upon which most traditional education strategies are based. Learners who are visually impaired are most likely to succeed in educational systems where appropriate instruction and services are provided in a full array of program options by the teacher to address each learner's unique educational needs.

OVERVIEW OF POINTS DISCUSSED

- Identifying students who are blind or visually impaired and establishing eligibility and the type of visual impairment, is the first step in meeting the student's needs.

- I will take into consideration that it is sometimes not possible to identify a learner with low vision from the appearance of their eyes, and this would prompt me to carefully observe their behaviour within the classroom.

- Making use of careful observation, I will try to identify complaints of behavioural and appearance signs the learner may have, taking into consideration what they can and cannot see.

- Addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a learner who has low vision cannot be done without a sound knowledge of these learners and their eye defects.

- I will approach the learner's parents for information on the developmental history of their child's visual impairment

- I will consult the Institutional Level Support Team.

- I will consult relevant policies from the Department of Education, for example Education White Paper 6

- I would expect the learner with low vision to perform and provide them with the tools they need, which will encourage them do their work with speed and competency equal to any other child.

- My approach to dealing with a learner with low vision would be highly individualistic and unique. In addressing a visual barrier experienced by a learner with low vision, I will adopt the Person centered approach

- I will accentuate my learner's strengths to their fellow classmates and friends would allow these learners to appreciate them despite their impairment.

- Attitude makes a huge difference in the acceptance of non visual techniques and in a learners confidence and self-esteem.

- If a learner's vision is not sufficient for a task, there's always other ways the task can be done

- I will guard against allowing my learner to become too reliant on me or other students.

- I will use the same form of discipline for students with visual impairments as I would for any other student.

- I will attend to aspects such as sound, best seating places and lighting

- I will allow the learner some flexibility to experiment so he/she can find out what works best for him/her.

- Learners with low vision often require text materials in large print and/or high contrast, which makes the text easier to read.

- I would adapt my teaching strategies. I will verbalize everything I teach.

- I will stand close to the low vision student and over-verbalize when doing a demonstration, making use of explicit language.

- I will use descriptive verbal instruction.

- ➢ I will adapt (not exclude learners) assignments or work which I think may be a challenging for a learner with low vision.

- ➢ I will keep in mind that my learner may need more time to complete tasks, tests and exams.

- ➢ I will teach the learner with low vision to make use of auditory memory by developing their ability to listen, localize and distinguish between sounds in the environment and to estimate the distance between themselves and these sounds.

- ➢ I will provide my learner with information, take them to objects they can touch and, at the same time, and explain them to the learner with low vision, ensuring they understand.

- ➢ I will teach my learner to gain concrete experience of the words they hear.

- ➢ I will actively encourage tactile exploration.

- ➢ I will make my learner aware of smell and texture

- ➢ I will teach my learner to make use of their laterality and directionality skills

The Education Support Structure and it's relationship at the National, District, School, and Classroom levels

The establishment of a coordinated education support structure service which is cognizant of and accommodates all children, regardless of their social, physical, emotional, intellectual, linguistic or other differences, is the prevailing objective envisaged by an inclusive education system. As such, educational support structures have been put in place to implement the ideals of inclusion. The national, district, school and classroom level support structures work collaboratively with each other to ensure service delivery at each level. To understand the roles of the national, district, institutional and classroom level support structures, this essay aims to provide a discussion of the Education support structures and their relationship at various levels.

The national level education support structure plans to implement the inclusion of all learners by use of a flexible inclusive education system, which includes all learners and which will be carried out during short and medium term period. These short and medium term goals of the national level education support structure policy will concentrate on addressing weaknesses in the present system, amplifying provision for advances to education for all learners, building the capacity and competences of teachers and support personnel and keeping track of and assessing these advancements. For example, higher education will be a realistic pursuit for learners who are disabled. Teachers will undergo in service training which will equip them with new and updated skills to work with learners with barriers to learning.

One aspect which illustrates the goals envisioned by the national level support structure is the department of Education's policy which aims to ensure that every learner has access to, can participate and value and succeed in lifelong education and training. National education support structure promotes and provides education for all. For example, learners who were once excluded in the education system, ie: learners with impairments or learners from other race groups, will now have access to superior education, unlike the inferior education that was offered to these learners in the past.

Building on from the goal of education provision for all learners, the national education support structure furthermore provides an inclusive framework for the country. The Inclusive Education Framework is used by schools to assist schools to plan, measure and improve how pupils with special educational needs are supported. The inclusive framework can be used by schools to help re-affirm good inclusive practices already in place in the school and will guide other schools to develop good practice. For example, by hosting multicultural dramas, promoting gender equality and a warm and welcoming environment for learners with physical impairments. Furthermore, the national education support structure develops policy on inclusive education which ensures that schools are supportive and engaging places for all school community members. It builds communities that value, celebrate and respond to diversity. The inclusive education policy is

underpinned by respectful relationships between learners and school community members. It is supported by collaborative relationships with parents and communities through communication, learning partnerships, participation and consultative decision-making. For example, all schools will provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socio-economic background or geographic location. In this connection, the national education support structure promotes and provides advocacy and information of programs which support inclusion, advocates for full membership, relationships, participation

and learning for all learners with disabilities, and within inclusive general education settings. For example, educators can take part in Learning Disabilities Awareness Month by teaching their students facts about learning disabilities—doing so may show children and adolescents how to be supportive peers.

The national education structure provides an education legislative framework. Schools operate under this legislative framework within the school system. The system establishes efficient and effective mechanisms that: meet the expectations of all learners, including those with barriers to learning, reflect local and state-wide values and inclusivity. For example, It will be unlawful for any education provider, to discriminate between pupils on grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender re assignment, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief in admissions, access to benefits or services, exclusions, and in the employment of staff.

In addition to providing an education legislative framework, the national level education support structure promotes and provides schools with national policies and that governs the schools. The policy will provide an outline on how the schools should be working and will become a vital instrument for shaping educational practice. For example, assessment of the learner's achievement will be measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning.

The national education support structure collaborates with other departments; the Health, Justice and Labour departments. The national education support structure forms partnerships with other government departments to provide support to learners with various needs. Integral to this approach is the national education structure's desire to obtain the best possible support for learners. For example, the national education support structure collaborates with Department of health to provide wheelchairs for paraplegic learners.

In the above discussion, several roles of the national support structure had been discussed. To further understand the roles of the education support structures, this section aims to discuss the roles of the district level support structure and its relationship with the school level support team, as well as the school itself.

The district level education support structure consist of staff from regional, provincial, district, special schools and head offices. It is the local needs of the community which determine who the main education support service providers at the district level will be. These support personnel may include curriculum specialists, management specialists, administrative experts, specialist support personnel, government professionals and community role players. It is these service providers who build the volume of schools to recognize, tend to learning difficulties and to accommodate a wide range of learning needs. It is the duty of the district support teams to evaluate programs, determine their effectiveness, suggest ways in which they can be changed and provide support accordingly. For example, district level education support structures can identify and document the outcomes, activities, and indicators to be evaluated, and assess the quantity and quality of the program's and suggests which areas need improvement or modification.

In addition to evaluating school programmes district support teams and school level support teams, school level support teams work collaboratively in order to provide curriculum assessment and

instructional support, making use of illustrative learning programs, learner support materials and equipment, assessment instruments and professional support for educators at special schools and full service and other educational institutions. For example, district support teams will make study guides for learners available.

They will make use of review and reflection tools which enable students to review and reflect on their knowledge, progress, and what they have learnt and achieved during a unit, topic or project. Accordingly, district support structures will provide professional support to teachers of neighborhood schools and play an active role in the professional development of these teachers. This can be done by formal and informal means of helping teachers not only learn new skills but also develop new insights into pedagogy and their own practice, and explore new or advanced understandings of content and resources.

The staff appointed in district support teams develop school based support for educators. Through supporting teachers and school management, with a particular focus on curriculum and institutional development, indirect support to learners will be provided. For example, support focusing on dealing with racially diverse learners, the learners with benefit from the teacher's increased knowledge about cultural and racial sensitivity.

Moreover, teachers will have access to appropriate pre service and in service education and training and professional support services which are made available by district support teams. In-service and pre-service training of teachers supports their development and offers, possibilities for betterment and improvement in the way in which they assess and support learners. For example, the district support team focuses on the in service training of teachers to support and assess a learner who is deaf. The district support team may suggest adaptations for teaching communication and auditory training goals by including a small group or individual instruction, by basing study units on real experiences. The teacher may also rely on print, pictures, gestures, and movements to support or give instruction. The district support structure assists educational centres' to recognise and address severe learning difficulties and to make accommodations for a range of learning needs. Some learners may require intensive and specialised forms of support to be able to develop their full potential. The district support team and training system is organised so that it can provide various levels and kinds of support to learners and educators. For example, schools will be trained to support learners with different special needs; learners with antisocial personality disorder, bipolar disorder, Asperger's syndrome, cerebral palsy, paraplegia and so on. The school support team nurses will be trained on how to provide assistance to learners, for example, a learner with bipolar disorder who is taking lithium (a mood stabiliser), may exhibit side effects; drowsiness, tremor, excessive thirst, increased urination, stomach pain and memory and concentration difficulties. The school support team nurses will be trained to recognise these side effects and deal with them accordingly.

Clearly, the district based support team adopts many roles and responsibilities toward the school based support team, and these have been outlined above. However, in order to understand the full relationship between the district based support team and the school based support team, it will be necessary to now examine the responsibilities of the school level support team.

School level support teams should be able to identify school needs and barriers to learning at the learner, teacher, curriculum and school levels. The school support team observes whether learners have achieved specific standards in school work. Learner work provides institutional support staff with a critical source of information about how a learner is learning, developing, acquiring new knowledge and applying new skill sets so that they may examine and improve teaching strategies to provide better support and service delivery for learners. The institutional support team also identifies structures, attitudes and practices that comprise school inclusivity — factors such as curriculum organisation, instructional strategies, assessment practices and course completion rates so that they may address issues arising from these factors using a process of strategic planning. For example, a teacher who has learners with a diverse range learning styles, but continues to use instructional strategies suitable only for a particular learning style, may be guided by the institutional support team to use differentiated instruction and continually assess and adjust lesson content to meet learners' needs and design lessons based on learners' learning styles.

At a school level, teacher, learner and school needs will be tended to and identified by learner and teacher support services established by the school support teams. School level support teams will establish learner and teacher support services which will supplement the learning and teaching process by identifying and tending to teacher, learner and school needs. Learner and institutional needs and barriers are identified and addressed through the school-based support team.

The primary function of school based support teams will be to implement learner and educator support services that will support learning and teaching processes by identifying and addressing

educator and school needs. For example, the school support team can liaise with the district support team to provide wheelchairs for physically impaired learners. By forming alliances with parents, school level support teams will promote the participation of parents in the planning and implementation of inclusive activities which will enable them to adopt an active role in learning and teaching of their children even if they may have disabilities or chronic illnesses. School based support structures ensures parental involvement and executes the planning of preventative strategies, supporting
teachers on site and monitoring and supporting learner progress. School support structures welcomes parents and expresses concern for the parent's needs as well as the
child's needs. There will be collaborative relationships with students and their families, by recognising parents/family members as valuable partners in promoting academic progress and by working with them from a posture of cultural reciprocity. For example, parents of grade 4 learners with dyslexia, will be able to monitor school and classroom activities, and to coordinate their efforts with teachers to encourage acceptable classroom behaviour and ensure that the child completes schoolwork. These
learners are more likely to experience success in the course through activities that support their learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds.

The school level support structure capacitates schools with skills and identifies and coordinates learning needs. With new information arising in various fields of study, technological advancements learners with unique needs and inclusive education for all learners, the school support team needs to continually update and improve teachers by in service training to keep up with these changes. For example, schools who are trained on
how to support a learner with Autism, will understand that Autistic learners have difficulty making eye contact with others and would understand that the learner needs to be continually reminded gently, but firmly to make eye contact while speaking to a person. Whereas staff which hasn't been
trained on supporting autistic learners, will simply dismiss the learner as having a low self-esteem. In this regard, school support team provides guidelines and management to
schools on inclusion. The school level support team is trained to guide and support inclusive teaching and learning processes. They are continuously guiding, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning processes to look for areas
which need improvement. For example, teachers who haven't worked with learners with disabilities may have scruples taking on a learner with an impairment, however, the school Support Team is supportive and provides guidance to the teacher and knows that if the teacher gains hands on experience, he/she would eventually become accustomed to working with learners with
impairments.

In addition to capacitating schools with skills and identifying and coordinating learning needs, the school education structure supports teachers and learners through the involvement of the district based support team. The district support team collaborates with school education structure,

classroom teachers, educational assistants, and parents to support learners with special needs. The school education support structure develops
strategies to address the needs and barriers of learning through the support from the district based support team. The school support team is trained to develop strategies to address the needs and barriers to learning. In order to
identify and meet the needs of their school, the school based support team liaises with the district based support team
and other support providers to identify and meet the needs of their school. The school level support team's function is to coordinate all support relating to the learner, teacher, curriculum and school development in the school. The district support team may include assistance with assessment, program planning, curriculum adaptations, technology, behavioural intervention, and development of resources. The district support team takes a proactive role with students who are making key
transitions (example, entering kindergarten, entering the school district, newly-diagnosed, and those entering secondary school).

School based support structures should also adopt existing and developing new learning programs and new teaching strategies that the class teacher may try in order to support the
learner. The school support team is trained to adapt existing programmes and develop new learning programmes and new teaching strategies that the class teacher may try in order to support the learner. The school support team has skills to
adapt, modify and develop programs and teaching methods, this will benefit the entire school system since it will be constantly bettering support and learning for the learner,
teachers and other staff members. For example, the school support team may notice that a teacher cannot capture the attention of her learners; learners in her class a chatting to each other, texting on cell phones underneath their desks and some of them are sleeping. The institutional support team may develop a teaching strategy to combat apathetic learners.

Furthermore, school based support structures should facilitate the sharing of resources (teaching methods and aids) and encourage teachers to share ideas. By sharing resources, the
teacher will be able to help each other and in doing so build a supportive community which raises the performance level of each teacher, and consequently, their learners. Various
ideas pooled together, form better outcomes in learner progress. Teachers could, for example, meet in teams to review student work against standards, using their insights to select
targets for instructional improvement, teachers could share planning time, learn about data to guide instructional decision making and ensure that lessons are aligned across grade levels.

The school support structure monitors standards of learning and teaching in classrooms. Monitoring standards of teaching and learning in the classroom helps the school support structure
to use learner performance data to continually evaluate the effectiveness of the educator's teaching and make more informed instructional decisions. For example, school support teams will be able to identify what teachers should do differently, what

teaching strategies they should change to promote learner progress.

The school level support team is centrally involved in identifying "at risk" and vulnerable learners in the learning process so as to support them. The school support team will be trained to identify factors such as learners lack of
interest in school or stated intention to leave, negative interactions with peers behavioural issues including aggression, violence or social withdrawal. These factors may point to the underlying problem affecting the learner. For example, family breakdown may be a factor in substance misuse, which may
itself contribute to other problems such as offending behaviour. The school support team equips teachers with the skills to identify learning barriers, how to address these
barriers and the skill to grade tasks to provide for mastery and achievement of the learner, regardless of their level of ability. For example, Nolutando experienced difficulties in visual perception, auditory discrimination, poor fine motor skills as a result of low muscle tone, poor focus and concentration, below average concrete and logical reasoning as well as a low self-esteem and social difficulties, the institutional support team could compile an Individualized Education Programme (IEP) to support Nolutanso's needs. This programme can include in-class support such as the use of a computer and computer-based educational programmes, tape aids and the use of additional materials in class.

The school based support structure's duty is to establish networks that promote effective communication between learners, teachers and parents as well as with NGOs and the welfare, health and Justice departments. Establishing networks that promote effective communication between learners, teachers and parents, as well as with NG0s and the welfare, health and justice departments. The school Support Team collaborates with teachers and other school support team members, parents, NGOs and welfare, health and justice departments to ensure they have what they need to provide additional support to learners.
They furthermore, establish links with the department of Labour to facilitate learnerships and job opportunities for disabled learners. The Institutional Support Team may interact with members of the Health department to garner the help of Psychologists, mental health professionals. For example, the Institutional Support Team's educational psychologist may collaborate with a team of other psychologists to assess
learners, so that all their perspectives can be compared and the learner may get an assessment which is fair.

In the above discussion several roles of the school support team have been considered. Lastly, I will discuss the role of the classroom level support structure.

At a classroom level, curriculum development, assessment and instructional development programs will make an effort to tend to learning and teaching requirements of the diverse range of learning needs and address barriers to learning. These barriers may arise from language and instruction, teaching style and pace, time frames for completion of curricula, learning support

materials and equipment and assessment methods and techniques.

Norms and standards for teacher education will be revised to include development of competences to recognize and address barriers to learning and to accommodate a diverse range of learning needs. For example, teachers could set strategies or tools to be able to differentiate the instruction within the content process or product of a lesson based off different readiness levels, interest levels or learning styles of their students, thus catering for students who experience various barriers to learning.

In order to help students perform to the best of their abilities in the classroom, general education teachers need to be familiar with how to implement curricula and instructional strategies. Through these strategies, learners with barriers to learning can experience many, if not all, of classroom activities so that they can have a better opportunity to meet educational standards. For example, teachers will make use of explicit verbal instruction in a classroom consisting of low vision learners, thereby allowing these learners to access all classroom activities.

Secondly, learner support materials, equipment and assessment methods will be put in place to improve teaching and learning. Learner support materials function as aids to assist learners in their learning experience, for example study guides for Mathematics will be learner friendly and composed to encourage understanding and learner interaction with the study material. Furthermore, assessment methods and techniques will be adapted to suit all learners. Classroom assessment methods and techniques are formative evaluation methods that serve to help the teacher to assess the degree to which their learners understand the course content and they can provide teachers with information about the effectiveness of their teaching methods. Assessment methods can be used to improve course content, methods of teaching, and, ultimately, student learning.

Finally, it is important that all teachers have a plan that allows their learners equal learning opportunities. As an educator, knowing more about how to teach learners with special needs will provide all learners with an education where learning is guaranteed and equal. Classroom level support will equip educators with the proper knowledge and techniques to effectively create an inclusive classroom that allows learners to learn at their full potential.

To conclude, clearly, the interplay between the various education support structures, namely; National, District, School and Classroom support structures, are all equally integral to the fair delivery of education and support to learners and teachers.

OVERVIEW OF POINTS DISCUSSED

➤ **National Level Support Structure**

The national level education support structure Identifying students who are blind or visually impaired and establishing eligibility and the type of visual impairment, is the first step in meeting the students needs.

➤

➤ I will take into consideration that it is sometimes not possible to identify a learner with low vision from the appearance of their eyes, and this would prompt me to carefully observe their behaviour within the classroom.

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- Making use of careful observation, I will try to identify complaints of behavioural and appearance signs the learner may have, taking into consideration what they can and cannot see.
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- Addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a learner who has low vision cannot be done without a sound knowledge of these learners and their eye defects.
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- I will approach the learner's parents for information on the developmental history of their child's visual impairment
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- I will consult the Institutional Level Support Team.
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- I will consult relevant policies from the Department of Education, for example Education White Paper 6
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- I would expect the learner with low vision to perform and provide them with the tools they need, which will encourage them do their work with speed and competency equal to any other child.
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- My approach to dealing with a learner with low vision would be highly individualistic and unique. In addressing a visual barrier experienced by a learner with low vision, I will adopt the Person centered approach
-
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- I would adapt my teaching strategies. I will verbalize everything I teach.

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- I will teach my learner to gain concrete experience of the words they hear.
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  - Identifying students who are blind or visually impaired and establishing eligibility and the type of visual impairment, is the first step in meeting the students needs.
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  - Addressing the challenge of a visual barrier in a learner who has low vision cannot be done without a sound knowledge of these learners and their eye defects.
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  - I will approach the learner's parents for information on the developmental history of their child's visual impairment
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  - I will consult the Institutional Level Support Team.
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- ➢ I will consult relevant policies from the Department of Education, for example Education White Paper 6
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- **School Level Support Structure**

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The Principal is the key to creating an inclusive environment at the school

"When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold. This is neither good nor bad; it is just the truth. Our impact is significant; our focus becomes the schools focus" (Whitaker, 2003, p.30) Whitaker's quotation catches the very essence of the impact that principals have on schools. As an instructional leader of their school, the principal is the key player in leading special education initiatives for inclusion. It is the principal's perception of inclusion and their overall visions of success for all students which shape the implementation of inclusion in schools.

An important aspect for principals, and indeed for schools, is why principals are the driving force behind an inclusive school environment.
In this essay I will seek to discuss a number of reasons for the pivotal role principals play in implementing inclusiveness in their schools.

The principal should have an overall concept of what inclusion means. How a principal of a school chooses to look at inclusion is critical to how, or even whether, much would be accomplished beyond the status quo. Inclusion in schools seeks to address the learning needs of all learners with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. The key to success or failure of inclusion in a school that is determined by the principal's role and attitude toward inclusive practices. The principal should have an unwavering belief in the value of inclusive schooling and considerable knowledge and skills for translating the concept into practice. It is the responsibility of the principal to set the tone of the school and aid the school as a whole to become a caring and supportive community. For example, a principal who firmly believes that his/her school can become an inclusive school, who has faith in this belief manifesting itself in the school, and who believes that inclusive education is valuable and essential, will instill this belief in other staff members. Staff members will be encouraged and will try their utmost best to implement inclusion, which is an achievable goal. Hence principals should be knowledgeable of special education law and policy as well as developing an environment that encourages and supports collegiality among staff members. Collaboration is a crucial element to creating and maintaining successful inclusive schools.

One aspect which illustrates the principal's responsibility in establishing collaboration among staff is the principal's collaborative role which lays the foundation for setting a clear sense of direction and this

helps to develop among the staff members, a shared understanding of the school and its goals and activities. This understanding becomes the basis for a sense of purpose or vision.

Principals envision an ideal of their school and communicate this ideal to other staff members to develop a concerted effort to implement this ideal. For example, a principal determined to combat gender stereotyping in a school may encourage teachers to use gender sensitive language; "Good morning Boys and Girls." as opposed to "Good morning guys." A principal may encourage teachers to use posters depicting men and women in different gender and work roles, for example, a father bathing a child and a mother gardening or a male nurse and a female mechanic. More specifically, the principal's collaborative is demonstrated by the responsibility of the principal to communicate to staff members the expectation to establish the school as an inclusive Centre of learning, care and support, thus the principal is a visible and vocal advocate of inclusive practices. The principal demonstrates his firmly held aspiration of creating an accepting and respectful climate and teaching practices in the school by practicing the acceptance of all learners himself and by demonstrating this expectation to staff so that they will be able to carry out this goal. For example, a principal may find that teachers become frustrated at teaching dyslexic learners. In order to change this, the principal may demonstrate to the teacher how to persevere when the learner does not understand, to read academic content slowly and clearly, while ensuring that the learner understands.

The principal uses a collaborative approach in creating school schedules that support inclusive practices. For example, provision of common planning time, time allocation for educators to engage in care and support programmes and institution level support team activities, effective use of all staff, placement of learners with general education environments, provision of learner supports and services and allocation of resources where needed. The principal ensures that staff members working with learners with disabilities are respectfully invited to offer input on successes, dilemmas, and suggestions for changes. The principal adheres to democratic governing in which all teachers and staff views are heard. Teachers can offer their experiences and what had worked for them. For example, a principal may consider a teacher's suggestion of using flash cards in different colours to help dyslexic learner's master academic content.

In addition to the collaborative role which inclusive principals play, the principal creates a safe, friendly and welcoming school climate for learners, parents and staff, such that it fosters collaboration and inclusivity. Furthermore, the principal should formulate schools policies that are not marginalizing and excluding. Principals should formulate school policies which are free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socio-economic background or geographic location. No policy should give superiority to some groups of learners and not others. For example, a principal may formulate a policy of the selection of prefects from a diversity of pupils with different abilities, special needs, socio-economic backgrounds, race, religion and language groups. He will not base his decision on only high achieving learners. Similarly, a principal that is fair and consistent by using the same form of discipline for students with impairments as they would for any other student, shows that all learners, regardless of disabilities, should be treated in the same way and all learners have rights and responsibilities. The principal should treat all learners with equality, be it in praise or discipline. For example, if a learner with a learning impairment is caught

blaspheming and belittling another religion, they should be penalized as would any other learner. Principals have the potential to strengthen school culture when they clearly and consistently articulate high expectations for all students, including subgroups which are often marginalized. For instance, a principal who aims to create a sense of belonging amongst certain racial minorities within the school may encourage teachers and children to include these children in playground activities with many other children. Effectively this suggests that the achievement of an inclusive school environment is affected by the leadership of the principal. The principal's role in implementing a positive attitude toward learners with special needs or learners, who are different, will set the stage for positive outcomes and a learning environment consistent with desired results. For example, a principal who demonstrates impartial acceptance and motivation of a diversity of learners will be a model for both learners and teachers to follow. Hence, the achievement of an inclusive environment is affected by the leadership of the principal.

The principal must have an inclusive admission policy. The principal welcomes and accepts admission of all learners, regardless of their race, religion, disability or socio-economic background. He does not dismiss a learner on the grounds that they are unfit to pursue schooling in his school. For example, a learner who has been diagnosed with Hiv and openly speaks about his Hiv status, has come for enrolment in a school. A principal should whole heartedly welcome the learner into his school and provide accurate and understandable information on HIV/AIDS to all members of staff, learners and parents and implement an HIV/AIDS policy.

The principal ensures appropriate learning opportunities for disabled learners. He/she should establish system-wide and school-based plans for educating students with learning disabilities in the regular education classroom when such placement is appropriate and establish instructional conditions and environments that allow teachers to capitalize on the strengths and remediate or compensate for the weaknesses of students with learning disabilities by appropriate materials and technology and reasonable class size. The principal should be sensitive to the diverse learner needs and be able to respond to these needs accordingly. The principal can ensure that assessment meets all learners' needs by providing each child and young person with the most appropriate support and may garner direct services for students from teachers certified in the area of learning disabilities and other qualified professionals such as school psychologists, counselors, speech-language pathologists, reading teachers, audiologists, and social workers. In doing so, they will ensure that every learner has the best chance of success. For example, assessment has to be fair and inclusive and must allow every learner to show what they have achieved and how well they are progressing. Given these pivotal roles, the principal is the central agent responsible for transitioning schools to inclusion in the regular education classroom where special education students are provided the necessary supports in order to learn alongside their non-disabled peers.

Additionally, the principal ensures inclusive schooling efforts are assessed using multiple instruments and approaches, and the assessment addresses academic outcomes, social/emotional/behavioral outcomes and stakeholder perceptions. The principal is responsible for providing teachers with the tools

necessary to be successful within an inclusive classroom by ensuring that they provide staff development in the area of differentiated instruction. The principal must provide adequate resources and assistive devices for those learners who need them. For example, principals can provide teachers with a set of strategies or tools to be able to differentiate the instruction within the content process or product of a lesson based off different readiness levels, interest levels or learning styles of their students. The old one size fits all approach to lesson design will not work within an inclusive school, hence, principals who provide the tools necessary for teachers to be successful would be conductive to an inclusive education environment.

The principal is the key element in shaping and sustaining educational programs that provide children with disabilities the opportunity to be educated in the general education setting. The principal finds strategies to celebrate the varied accomplishments of all learners. A principal may hold an annual awards day for learners who have strengths in different areas, for example, art and creativity awards or recognition for children who cannot walk but are excellent in creative writing. Principals could encourage inclusion by raising awareness about addressing the needs of diverse groups in their school by using innovative strategies which would welcome and value all students. For example, a play consisting of learners with various disabilities and abilities, racial diversity and other learning barriers can be performed at school to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for all students. The principal constantly searches for strategies to ensure educators provide equal access for all learners. Principals search for strategies for teachers to use in which all learners will be able understand what is taught to them. They develop individual students through promoting rich opportunities for learning both within and out of the classroom. For example, principals may liaise with Durban Bat Centre to conduct a lesson on art and involve the learners in creating their own works of art.

Another way in which the inclusive principal demonstrates the acknowledgement and honoring of his/her students is to ensure, via school support teams, that learners' Individual Support Plans contain the information necessary for designing services and supports. Principals can facilitate individualized education plans by developing systems to ensure that learning is personalized for every student, not just the ones who struggle or who are likely to succeed. Principals make an effort in understanding each individual and their unique needs so that Individual Support Plans may benefit all learners and not just a few.

Provides details about what is most For example, a principal may facilitate an Individual Support Plan which provides details about what is most important to an individual with intellectual disabilities so that everyone involved in supporting that individual can focus on those areas. An inclusive principal fosters and honours as much as possible support to a learner at the school before sanctioning any referral for assistance or individual assessment outside the school. They are highly inclusive, having complete regard for the progress and personal development of every pupil. The principal puts every effort into nurturing the well-being and holistic development of a learner before referring the learner to

another institution (or a Special School). They take interest in each of their learner's progress and development. For example, a principal may find that his/her school which is a full service school, only offers moderate to low level of support, whereas his learner needs high intensity support. The principal may refer the learner to a Special School and keep track of his progress and development.

In addition to acknowledgement and regard for every pupil, the principal must recognize their role in setting the tone for the transformation process, and to ensure that decisions are made, challenges met and processes supported in line with the philosophy of inclusion. The principal needs to be firm in addressing these. Leadership is needed to ensure that educators and learners are supported in teaching and learning, e.g.through skills development, mentoring, material provision and external services and the principal has to take the lead in ensuring that there are additional support programmes for teaching and learning especially to reach out to learners with learning difficulties. The principal must arrange for his teachers to be trained on accommodating diversity when teaching and give teachers opportunities for good quality professional development on how to be an effective inclusion teacher and what that looks like in the classroom is crucial to effective implementation of an inclusion program. Teachers can be trained to develop skills in creativity, collaborative teaming processes, co-teaching and inter-personal communication that will enable them to work together to
craft diversified learning opportunities for learners who have a wide range of interests, learning styles and intelligences. For example, teachers could set strategies or tools to be able to differentiate the instruction within the content process or product of a lesson based on different readiness levels, interest levels or learning styles of their students, this catering for students who experience various
barriers to learning.

Principals must be out in the hallways, interacting with students. Their presence must be such that students know who they are and also feel comfortable approaching and interacting with them. Principals who are not aloof and are able to relate to their learners, can gain first hand experience on how learners interact with each other or what biases they may have towards certain learners with barriers to learning. Principals can work with learners to combat their differences and gain a shared understanding of each other. For example, principals may take a day off being in their office to observe the occurrences on the playground. Which learners are interacting with whom? Are learners with barriers to learning being excluded from games? Are learners of the same race interacting only with each other and not other races? Furthermore, another trait of effective, inclusive principals is their high level of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills. Often, the power of school leaders is vested in their capacity to persuade and influence, rather than to direct. Principals with high emotional
intelligence and interpersonal skills will gain greater support to work on a concerted effort to implement

inclusion in their school because they are able to communicate and "win people over". For example, a principal may relate to teachers in a way that teachers feel respected and acknowledged. These teachers will be willing to work on an effort to implement inclusion if they feel respected and acknowledged by the principal.

Having examined the ways in which the principal ensures equal learning opportunities and a welcoming environment for all learners, it is now necessary to consider the principal's relationship with government agencies and other systems of support and how the principal liaises with these support systems in order to address barriers to learning and support learner progress.

The principal facilitates relationships and support networks between the school, NGOs, CBOs, DPOs, other government departments, staff members and parents with an aim to address barriers to learning and teaching. For example, a principal may get a representative from the Health Department to address learners and staff on living with Hiv and Aids so that stereotypes existing among learners and staff may be combated. The principal accesses and makes available a wide array of resources to support educators and other staff members in creating inclusion in schools. For example, wheelchairs, bright lights, projectors and magnifiers for use in classrooms for learners with diverse needs. Principals build bridges to connect learners with disabilities to the broader education community and its learning and social resources. The principal links learners with disabilities to a greater range of learning and support resources. To be effective, special educators serve as advocates, connectors, and collaborators. For example, principals may link learners with disabilities to the disabled people's union.

The principal cultivates a range of partnerships particularly with parents, business and the community to support pupil learning and progress thereby promoting inclusive education. By interacting with the school, business, community members and the parents of learners gain a first-hand understanding of how schools operate and the rhythm of school life. Parents, business and community members can use and build on their skills and confidence, develop friendships and work collaboratively with other parents interested in supporting the school create an inclusive education system for the learners. For example, meetings can be held about school policies, such as anti-bullying, code of behavior, respect for disabled learners, anti-racism and combating gender stereotyping.

Finally, behind every successful inclusive school is a great principal with passion, vision, and a practical plan. With so much riding on their strong and proactive leadership, every inclusive principal views inclusion as an important goal, a goal worth seeking, and a goal when implemented, allows both students and teachers to control their own destiny in making a more meaningful learning environment. To achieve this quest, it takes more than a strong principal with concrete ideas and technical expertise. It

requires a redefinition of the role of principals, one that removes the barriers to learning by eliminating bureaucratic structures and reinventing relationships to provide all students with access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment, solicit input and expertise from everyone; teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff, create a school culture that encourages independence and high expectations for all and create inclusive service delivery for all learners.

OVERVIEW OF POINTS DISCUSSED

- Identifying students who are blind or visually impaired and establishing eligibility and the type of visual impairment, is the first step in meeting the students needs.
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- I will take into consideration that it is sometimes not possible to identify a learner with low vision from the appearance of their eyes, and this would prompt me to carefully observe their behaviour within the classroom.
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