

Inclusion

Inclusion in education is about valuing all children and the environment that best suits their learning equally. This might be best attained within a mainstream school, or a special school. The aim is to increase the participation and reduce the exclusion from the local school communities and the culture that accompanies them.

To be fully inclusive, schools might need to restructure their teaching and learning practices to accommodate individual learners.

Barriers to learning should be reduced and this can benefit the whole school community.

Where differences between students exist, they should be viewed as learning opportunities for the whole school and teachers should be fully trained and resourced adequately in order to implement any differentiation required within the classroom.

There are many definitions of inclusion. Lynch and Irvine (2009) describe 'authentic inclusion' as:

“a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student.”

The Index for Inclusion suggests that inclusion involves the following:

- Valuing all students and staff equally.
- Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having special educational needs'.
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely.
- Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome.
- Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality.
- Improving schools for staff as well as for students.
- Emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement.
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.