

Creating an Inclusive School: Inclusive School (transcript)

DANIEL: One of the biggest things to change in a school environment are the soft things we don't see other than the physical things. The soft things are the teacher attitude. Beyond the teacher, we have the administrators who really determine a lot of things that happen in the school environment. I would like to see a school administration that is pro inclusion, a school administration that can sit down and allocate resources to facilitate inclusion, allocate resources in terms of training teachers, in terms of facilitating material adaptations, in terms of allocating time for everybody to facilitate inclusion.

The teachers, I would like to see a teacher who accounts everybody into their classroom, a teacher-- a teacher who would seek the advice of colleagues and cooperate with colleagues to facilitate inclusion rather than working as an individual. I would like to see a teacher who will deliberately seek out for information to facilitate learning for that child.

I would like to see a school environment that adapts the physical environment so that everybody, children on wheelchairs, on walking canes, should be able to be provided with ramps and rails and adapted toilets, at least a physical environment that is adapted. But above all, I think I would like to see a school that has got a positive attitude in terms of the school administration and the teachers. I would like to see a school that adapts curriculum to the needs of that child, a school which, both in policy and in action, propagates inclusion.

In the school assemblies, they should be able to talk about it. In school meetings, they should be able to discuss it openly, both with the school community in terms of the parents, the children, and the teachers so that everybody is seeing inclusion. That is the kind of environment I would like to see.

LYDIA: If I walked into an inclusive school, one of the key thing I would look out for is-- first of all, I would try to understand the culture, the culture, the way people behave, the way the environment is laid out or is utilised. Have we taken away, one, the physical barriers? Then, two, maybe the bureaucratic barriers.

But of great importance for me, it would be, do they have resources? Do they have what I call the resource room? Because if there is a resource room, then it means that they will attend to that child who has a special need. Not necessarily if the special need arises from time to time, then the child can go to the resource room. If not that, then it means if there is a resource room, it means there are experts in the resource room who will come either to class or will remain in the resource room, but support even the regular teacher.

And once we have the resource room, then it means we've been shaping people's attitude. We are creating self-esteem in the learners who are likely to experience challenges in education, and we are validating them and telling them that school is for you. But when I go to school and there are no resources for me because I have these special needs or I have this disability, then school is no longer for me. I feel like the doors shut the moment I got into school. So for me, a resource room with the competent people in it becomes a big driver for an inclusive school.