

Responsibilities of District-Based Support Teams



District based support teams should primarily facilitate and support the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.

What responsibilities are required of full service schools?

- ❖ capability to **mobilise community and parent participation** for the development of full service schools;
- ❖ general **orientation and introduction** of management, governing bodies and professional staff **to the inclusion model**; and
- ❖ **early identification** of barriers to learning and intervention in the Foundation Phase.

Scenario - A school utilising a DBST

“When our school admitted learners with barriers to learning for the first time, we had a variety that included sight, speech, hearing and learners with intellectual barriers to learning. We have established a Learner Support Team that consists of from different grades, parents, and members of the Health Department, Social and Welfare Services, and the Children’s Protection Unit. The SBST has been trained in supporting other educators. When they come across problems they refer these to the DBST.”

Responsibilities of both full service and special schools

- ❖ consider the individual needs of the ‘client’ (the learner and the learner’s family);
- ❖ foreground the right (entitlement) of the learner to sound curriculum delivery;
- ❖ bear in mind parental rights and responsibilities; and
- ❖ ensure the professional accountability of the staff, the school and the system.

(Rayner, p. 23).

Responsibilities of parents

Nurture the child and the support the school wherever possible. Maintain open communication and follow the advice of professionals.

Scenario from a Full Service School on parental involvement

Parental involvement is not very good but we do try. For example, we are busy organising a seminar for parents, based on the discipline problems they have with their children. We conducted a survey to find out what problems they faced so that the talk would be directed at real problems and questions parents have. Later, we plan a talk by an Occupational Therapist on visual perception. But we need to raise funds to give speakers a fee, or else find professionals who will assist us pro bono. We call these parental support sessions.

Scenario on parental involvement

“Our school established a learning support team, which includes educators and parents. The SBST is informed about barriers to learning experienced by the learners in their classrooms. Together, the SBST groups the issues and then educators discuss strategies and methods together. The suggested approaches are tried out and then the results are reported back. If necessary, adjustments are suggested. Parents on the SBST support the professionals as and where they can, and extra assistance is sought through contacts in the community. (Nurses, counsellors etc.)

(Adapted from Best Practice Booklet, p. 55).

For more information on what principals can do to encourage parental / care-taker involvement, see “Values and Ethos” in Unit 1.

Responsibilities of the School Governing Body

the SGB should strongly support teaching and learning in its activities. It can do this by:

- ❖ Encouraging active parental participation in the school.
- ❖ Working to establish a collaborative culture and open communication.
- ❖ Ensuring that the correct policies are in place.
- ❖ Rallying assistance from the community, professionals and government support services.
- ❖ Ensuring that they are aware of the needs of learners and educators for teaching and learning and in particular of special needs learners.

Scenario – what an SGB did:

“Our SGB started to draft a school policy which is inclusive; formed an admission committee to formulate an admission policy which is inclusive; included an item on inclusive education in all staff and parents’ meetings and formed an Access Audit Committee to look after the physical features of the school to make sure that they are accessible to learners with barriers to learning.”

(Adapted from Best Practice Booklet, p. 54.)

For more information on governing body roles and responsibilities see SASA (in Unit 1).

Responsibilities of the principal as a champion for inclusive education:

The principal as a champion for inclusive education:

- ❖ is a leader who believes in inclusive education and promotes it in everything he or she does.
- ❖ has a positive attitude which impacts on the whole school.
- ❖ is a good organiser and manager.
- ❖ helps teachers to organise support groups, cooperate with each other and achieve more together.
- ❖ ‘models’ respectful and efficient ways of working and completing tasks and activities.
- ❖ involves parents and the community in the life of the school through the SGB.
- ❖ makes teachers feel supported and motivated to take on new responsibilities.

(Adapted from Best Practice, p .55).

“The principal is important in the effective implementation of inclusive education in the schools. In the schools where the principals were supportive, they acted as a ‘champions’ for inclusive education. This had a very positive effect on the teachers, the parents and other role players.”

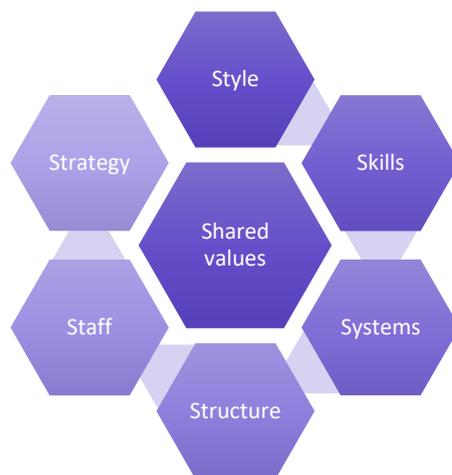
(Adapted from Best Practice Booklet, p. 53).

Particular responsibilities of principals in Full Service and Special Schools:

- ❖ Be an advocate for the disabled;
- ❖ Champion systems to provide access for learners;
- ❖ Develop a deep understanding of the nature of different barriers to learning and how such learners can participate in society;
- ❖ Encourage and foster community and parental and peer acceptance of learners with barriers to learning;
- ❖ Enlist community support to enable disabled learners to participate as functioning members of society.

Further information is provided below on the management and leadership strategies that principals should use.

In order to be effective in this role, principal should address and continually develop competence in the following areas:



Source: McKinsey Quarterly, *Enduring Ideas: The 7-S Framework*.

Principals must:

- ◆ share a belief in inclusive education and champion it in everything they do
- ◆ share a commitment to the success of all students



- ◆ 'model' respectful and efficient ways of working and completing tasks and activities
- ◆ have a positive attitude which impacts on the whole school
- ◆ facilitate dialogue, support and sharing between teachers, administrators, learners and families



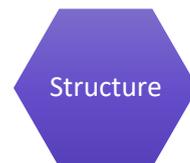
- ◆ have fundamental task knowledge and experience
- ◆ understand laws that protect the educational rights of children with barriers to learning
- ◆ demonstrate good organisational and managerial skills



- ◆ implement systems of assessment that accommodate learner and classroom needs
- ◆ implement systems of support for learners, teachers, and the school community
- ◆ implement systems of reporting which enable effective monitoring and evaluation
- ◆ implement systems of communication with various stakeholders (learners, staff, parents, administrators, district and the community)



- ◆ implement staffing structures that allow classroom teachers and specialists to have regularly scheduled common planning time to address instructional needs and classroom concerns
- ◆ coordinate appropriate timetabling that makes effective use of resources
- ◆ ensure that the learning and working environment is well designed and appropriate to learner and staff needs, in terms of ease of access, building layout, etc.



- ◆ build collaborative relationships with all stakeholders
- ◆ recognise professional strengths and interests, talents, skills, etc. of staff and foster shared leadership
- ◆ foster the professional development of staff to build understanding of effective instructional models, effective teaching and management skills and commitment to implementing innovations
- ◆ build support networks that facilitate lasting implementation



- ◆ invest time into policy and procedure development



(Adapted from: & DiPaola & Walther-Thomas 2003 *Principals and Special Education: The Critical Role of School Leaders*; p. 55).

The DBE has put forward the South African Standards for Principals (Draft). This outlines eight key areas as follows:



The detail behind these categories for the standards must be known and studied by school leaders.

The School Management Team

The SMT in a Full Service or Special School should ensure that the drive to transform the whole school focuses on **improved teaching and learning**.

To achieve this, the principal and the SMT need to:

Lead by example	Believe that all learners can learn; Be enthusiastic about the change; Accept curriculum adaptations; Encourage purposeful discussion about teaching and learning.
Provide support	As and when teachers need it, even when the needs differ from time to time.
Promote and model collaboration	Through communication, feedback, conflict resolution, negotiation and so on.

Encourage discussions on teaching and learning strategies	Such as peer coaching, problem solving on partnerships or groups, co- and team teaching for example.
Encourage self - development of all educators	Development of new skills, methods, teaching strategies.