

Inclusive Education^{1,2}

What is the inclusive school?

The inclusive school is a school in which all the workers are involved in the education act of all the students therein, out of a full sense of professional responsibility. This is a school where all the teachers are homeroom teachers and education is an inseparable part of the teacher's work. The practical implications of this definition include the following:

- An inclusive school is a school where there is a cognitive, academic, emotional, and social response to each and every one of the learners including those who can be defined as 'weak' and 'strong' at different levels and in different areas, according to the high standards in the field.
- An inclusive school is a school where the workers implement practices of teaching and education that do not produce an exclusionary reality, not on an academic background and not on any other background – economic, ethnic, gender, and so on.
- An inclusive school is a school where the workers see the relationship between the students' mental wellbeing and the academic achievements and act according to what derives from it – they work on the implementation of adjusted learning programs and considerate social activities.
- An inclusive school is a school where everybody is committed to the reinforcement of the feelings of belonging, unconditionally – every social activity is intended for everyone, not necessarily for the 'good' students or the 'normative' students.
- An inclusive school is a school where there is an in-depth professional-investigative discourse among the staff members regarding the processes of teaching and education and a relevant discussion about the action plan required for the child so as to promote each and every student.
- An inclusive school is a school where there is a solution and professional support for all the teachers, out of the recognition of the challenges in the work of education and teaching and the difficulties they entail.

An Inclusionary and Not Exclusionary Policy

- Homeroom classes built on the basis of uniform dispersion. There are no homeroom classes of 'weak' students, classes designated for the high school matriculation examinations distinct from classes not so designated, and so on.

¹ This document is the result of joint work of **Shaveh Center for Equity and Inclusion in Education** in Oranim Academic College of Education. Took part in writing: Dr. Michal Razer, Dr. Nivi Gal-Arieli, Dr. Yael Poyas, Ms. Osnat Zorda, and Dr. Einat Lichtinger.

² In Hebrew, it is necessary to distinguish between the concept of 'containing' and 'inclusion', which have the same root word. In English, the term would be inclusive education.

Every student is affiliated to a multicultural homeroom class with many levels of study in it.

- In the learning groups there are students of different backgrounds – ethnic, cultural, and economic – with complete avoidance of the unification of students from an identical background, even if it seems that their achievements are similar or their difficulties are parallel. Thus, for example, the school will adopt extra care not to build a class that is entirely composed of children of immigrants.
- From the recognition of the superiority of the students' feeling of belonging as a condition of their success, the school does not adopt actions of after school detention or suspension as a tool for the handling of behavior problems or regular attendance issues. The students are not denied participation in any activity as a punishment.
- The students are not denied any academic/social activity because of their parents' economic difficulties.
- Scholastic support reinforcement is not denied because of behavior problems or regular attendance problems.
- There is no mixture between practices for the handling of behavioral problems and practices for academic-cognitive promotion. Thus, for example the reduction of the grade in the subject is not a tool for the punishment of behavior problems.
- Problems of lack of integration are addressed through the search for ways to reinforce the belonging, and not for alternative frameworks.
- An effort is made to promote children with difficulties without separating them from the homeroom classes. Unique reinforcement of studies in any field is not performed through the separation from the group.
- Learning groups for students with certain learning difficulties operate temporarily, and the transition from them to the regular group is the criterion of the teacher's success in it.
- Workers from different sectors and different cultures are employed in the school.

Structural-Organizational Aspects

- The number of children that every teacher meets is adjusted to the task of the creation of the personal relationship, which obligates the in-depth familiarity with each and every one of them and the construction of an adjusted educational program. Thus, for instance, the teacher is not assigned a task of instruction in eight to ten classes a week and meeting with two hundred to three hundred students. Conversely, the system is built so that the teacher's stay in the class during the week will not be less than the number of hours required for the formation of the relationship (for instance, it is clear that a lesson learned for two hours a week does not enable such a relationship).

- Each and every student in the school is officially organizationally connected to a staff member, for the purpose of a regular and frequent meeting.
- School teachers receive professional support and care, in a variety of aspects of their work, with emphasis on the coping with difficulties and construction of adjusted programs, as detailed.

Frequent Professional Support

- Members of the school staff hold regular meetings. The aspiration is for every teacher to see in the school the reference group of the peers, which is available and intimate, enables true deliberation, clarification, and shared coping with the challenges of the activity.
- Some of the regular guidance is focused on the adjustment target (see in the continuation ‘teaching practices’). Each and every teacher is capable of working with different students from different academic, cultural, and personal backgrounds, what is defined as ‘weak’ or ‘gifted’. Actions of support and instruction for the staff are aimed at coaching on this matter, including formation of the ability to maneuver between different and changing needs.
- The directive includes the development of skills in relevant responses, including coping with violence in all its forms.

Teaching Practices

- The teachers are supporters of learning, as opposed to conveyers of study material. In the measurement of the students’ achievements, a distinction is drawn between the examination of the knowledge learned for the needs of shaping the teaching and the shaping of the way of learning of the students as individuals, a process in which there is extensive room for verbal assessment and taking into account abilities and inclinations. This is also with regard to the need to successfully pass external evaluation tests: preparation for such tests can be done as a part of the teaching, for the purposes of the coaching of the students. It is not necessary to base the ongoing assessment of the students on parallel or identical tests.
- The teaching task of each teacher includes the construction of teaching activities adapted to the differences in the class.

Relationship between Teacher and Student

- The main task of each and every teacher is to create a system of belief, also with students who are ‘relationship harmed’.
- The work of each and every teacher is aimed at the creation of a dialogue with students as individuals, out of the recognition of the essentialness of the dialogue to the process of each student’s emotional-social and cognitive development.
- The work of each and every teacher includes setting boundaries in the relationship in such a way that does not create exclusion or harm.

- The work of each and every teacher includes skill in the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of each and every student, boy and girl, for the purpose of the formulation of a suitable action program.
- The work of each and every teacher includes the identification of situations of distress of students and the coping with behavioral or scholastic difficulties and intelligent choice of response from the extensive repertoire.

Relationship between Teachers and Parents

- The basic assumption is that the school is a partner in the raising of the children by their parents. Therefore, on the one hand, sanctions are not applied against parents, and, on the other hand, they are partners in every course of action related to the students as individuals.
- The school staff works on the development of a system of trust between them and the different parents, and this includes learning that is respectful of the different cultures and practices, including family customs, and refrains from a judgmental attitude.
- The communication with parents who do not speak Hebrew, both in spoken conversations and in documents, is in a language understood by the parents.
- The members of the school staff seek to learn the background of the parents of the students in their classes, including unique difficulties, aspirations, and degree of the ability to help the child at home, with sensitivity towards different population groups.
- The school workers do not assign to the parents care of the problems in which the school has failed. For instance, the teacher's difficulty with creating a relationship with the student will be addressed with the assistance of the staff and not with the assignment of a role on this matter onto the parents.
- The school functions transparently.

Evaluation of the Teaching

- The evaluation of the teacher addresses both the achievements and the quality of the process, equally, including partial successes and with full reference to the nature and complexity of the groups of students with which the teacher works.
- The evaluation of the teacher includes academic and pedagogical aspects – the ability to manage in complex situations, the ability to create trust with the child and the parents, the ability to conduct dialogue, etc.

Aspects in the Conversations in the Teachers' Room and in the Pedagogical Meetings

The discussions of the staff in all the levels and contexts are undertaken with careful preservation of the students' privacy, their dignity, and their family's dignity. Members of the staff take pains to convey relevant information and to avoid all form of value-based judgment.