

## school based teacher development programme transforming classroom practices

### Transforming Classroom Practices Programme

The School Based Teacher Development (SBTD): Transforming Classroom Practices (TCP) is one of the dimensions UNRWA's Reform Strategy. The programme aims at improving the teaching and learning practices of teachers in the classroom by developing active learning pedagogies that will support effective engagement of the students. It will be the basis for an in-service training programme for all UNRWA teachers.

The programme adopts a blended learning approach and consists of 6 modules. Each module focuses on one of the aspects of the teaching-learning process. Collectively, the programme materials are the backbone of providing quality teaching and learning practices in UNRWA schools.

The modules are built interactively where the teacher is requested to reflect on his/her practices and to try the use of a variety of learner-focused strategies.



module five

**the inclusive approach  
to teaching and learning**



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A decorative header at the top of the page features a light blue background with a white grass-like border at the bottom. Various school-related icons are scattered across the header, including a ruler, a pencil, a book, a globe, a magnifying glass, a pencil case, and the letters 'ABC'.

# **Introduction to the School Based Teacher Development programme (SBTD)- Transforming Classroom Practices (TCP)**

School Based Teacher Development programme (SBTD)- Transforming Classroom Practices (TCP) is a key dimension of UNRWA's Education Reform Strategy. The programme seeks to improve teaching and learning practices in the UNRWA classroom through developing interactive pedagogies or ways of teaching that will engage children more effectively in their learning. The SBTD is paving the way for comprehensive in-service training for all UNRWA teachers. There are six Open and Distance Learning modules and each of these focus on different aspects of teaching and learning that together provide an overview of many different approaches and ways to develop quality teaching and learning in UNRWA Schools. The text modules are interactive and ask the teacher to reflect on their practices, try new approaches and consider the impact they have on the children's learning and motivation.



## **Intro to Module 5: The inclusive approach to teaching and learning**

### **Unit 17–18: Inclusive schools and classrooms (double Unit)**

The development of inclusive schools and inclusive teaching practices is at the core of UNRWA's Education Reform Strategy and this double Unit sets out to increase teacher's knowledge and understanding of what inclusive education involves. It seeks to develop and change teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, and help them develop the skills needed to help them incorporate inclusive practices into their classrooms. Key to achieving this is helping teachers to understand the barriers to participation that affect students with specific learning difficulties access the curriculum. The Unit explores working with parents, who often have more experience of their own child's needs, will help teachers to increase students' access to the curriculum. It may also extend teachers' understanding of the different barriers and problems learners face.

### **Unit 19: Identifying the diverse needs of learners**

This Unit explores the diverse needs students may have because of a disability, physical or mental impairment and other challenges. The Activities and Case Studies provide opportunities for teachers to consider the signs that can indicate that a student is facing learning difficulties. There is also information about the main types of impairment. UNRWA schools are to set up Student Support Teams (SST) that will comprise teachers who have expertise in supporting students with diverse needs and can help and advice teachers on strategies to use to help individual children.

### **Unit 20: Supportive teaching and learning strategies**

This Unit builds on earlier Units which explore the nature of interactive learning but it focuses on approaches that may particularly help students with greater learning needs. It explores a range of multisensory approaches to teaching and learning and seeks to develop the skills and abilities needed to differentiate their teaching suitable to the child, adapt and use a wide range of classroom strategies appropriately which will better support children with diverse learning needs to access the curriculum.



## Module 5 Units 17–18

### Inclusive schools and classrooms

#### Introduction

Welcome to Module 5: The inclusive approach to teaching and learning. The Units in this Module introduce you to the concept of inclusion, the key elements of inclusive schools and inclusive classroom practice, and practical ways of meeting the diverse needs of all learners. This first Unit – Inclusive schools and classrooms – is a double Unit, so it will take you two weeks to complete. This Unit outlines the principles and approaches of inclusive education and will develop your understanding about what inclusive education means. It will introduce you to inclusive language and attitudes, and show you ways of removing the barriers that some children face in accessing quality education. Finally, it will examine how to involve parents and the local community in supporting inclusive schools.

As you read through this Module, you will notice that good inclusive practice has many things in common with what you have already learned in previous Modules. This is because inclusive education is about improving schools and teaching practices overall in order to provide quality, learner-centred education to all children, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, gender, socioeconomic status, psychosocial or health needs. All children have a right to quality education.

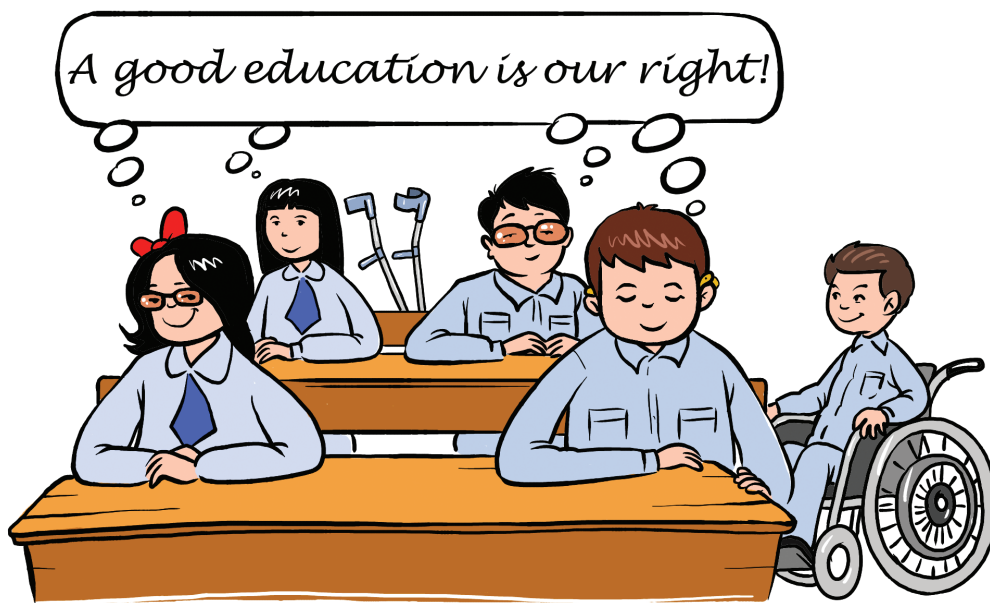


Figure 65: All children have a right to quality education.

## Teacher development outcomes

By the end of this Unit you will have:

- increased your knowledge and understanding of inclusive education;
- developed positive attitudes and relevant skills to work towards inclusive practices;
- explored ways of removing barriers to learning, development and participation for all the children in your class and school;
- increased your understanding of the importance of engaging parents and communities in supporting inclusive education.

### Moving towards inclusive education

You have probably already heard of inclusive education and perhaps you think that it is about teaching children with special needs or disabilities. This is partly true, but inclusive education also means much more than this. Inclusion is an approach to education that aims to remove barriers to quality education for all children. Inclusion is a process of changing the education system; changing schools and classroom practice in order to better meet the diverse needs of all learners.

UNRWA, through its Education Reform, has embarked on embedding inclusive approaches and attitudes in all education systems and practices. The UNRWA Inclusive Education Policy states that:

*'The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is committed to providing quality inclusive education which respects the rights and appreciates the diversity of all children. UNRWA aims to remove barriers to access and create equal opportunity for learning and participation in order to enable all Palestine refugee children to realize their full potential regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health and psychosocial needs.'*

Inclusive education is a human rights based approach that is reflected in a number of international commitments including the:

- United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1989, articles 2, 23, 28 and 29);
- Jomtien Conference: World Declaration on Education For All (1990);

- Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994);
- Dakar Conference for Education for All: Dakar Framework for Action (2000).

In the past, many teachers thought that children with diverse needs, learning difficulties or disabilities had to be taught in special schools by teachers with special education qualifications. There was little understanding that the learning problems of many children could be caused by the way teachers taught, the education system itself or problems the children faced at home or in their communities. Later thinking favoured integrating children who were described as having slight to moderate learning difficulties or disabilities into regular schools. However, the emphasis was on making the child fit the school rather than expecting the school to respond to the student’s individual needs.

The idea that we could diagnose and ‘fix’ the problems of students was based on a medical model of disability. In contrast, inclusive education is based on a social model of disability, which acknowledges the effects of environmental barriers on a student’s learning and development. These environmental factors include schools, classrooms and the education system itself.

### Activity 38

Consider the following two models (Integrated Education and Inclusive Education):

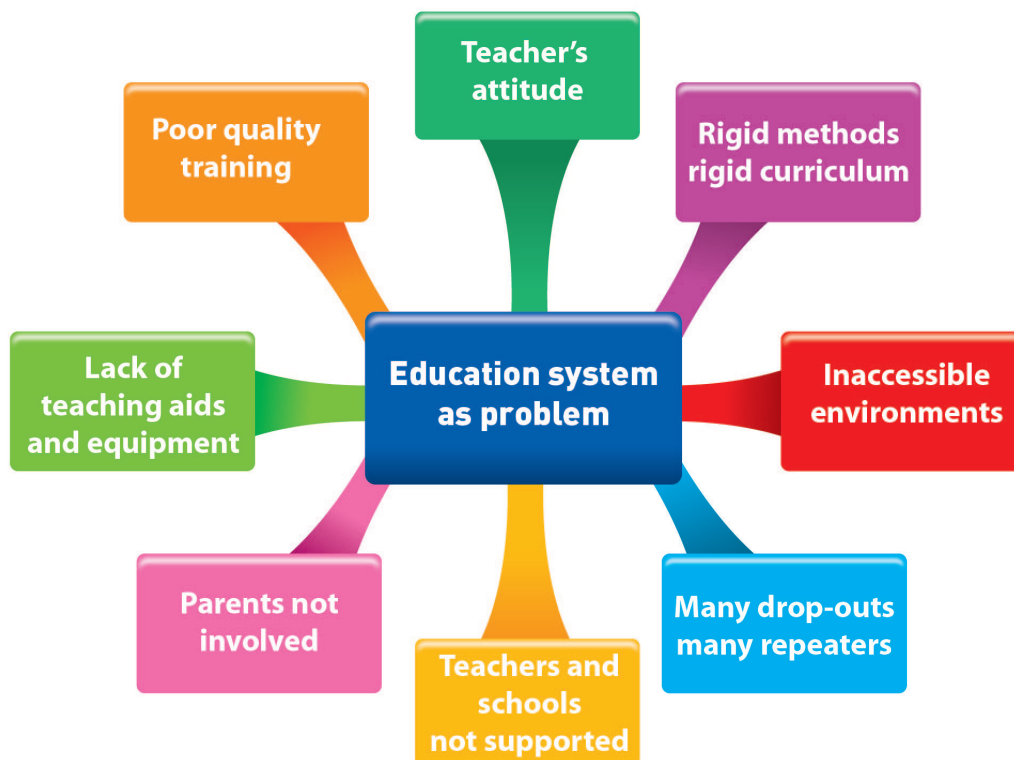


Figure 66: Inclusive Education Model.



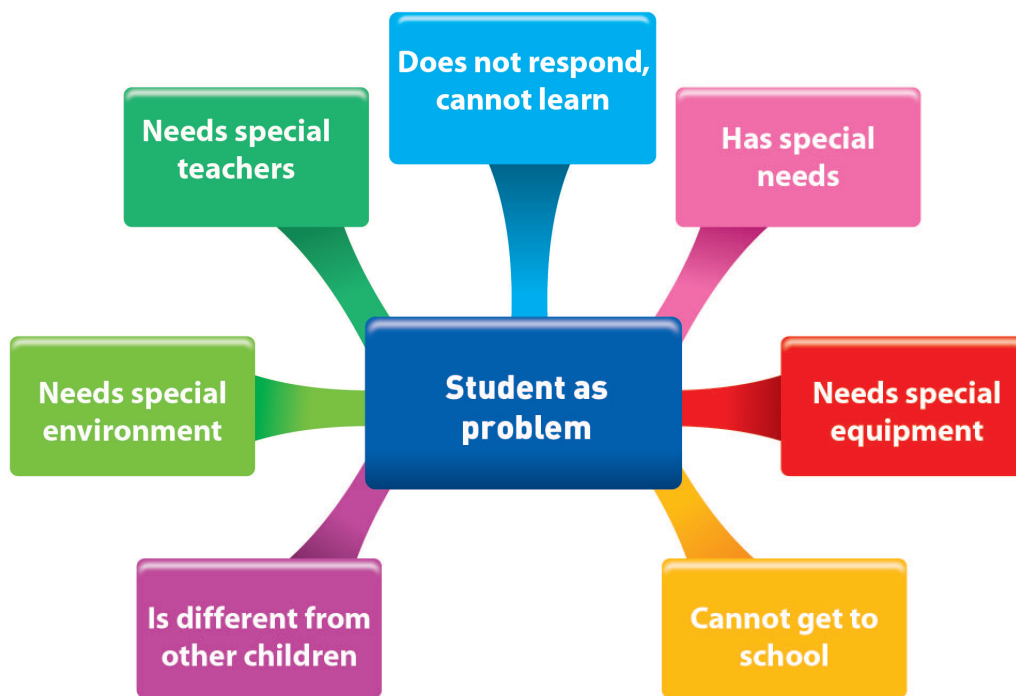


Figure 67: Integrated Education Model.

Which model do you think reflects your school's and UNWRA's overall approach? Do you have any students that you think of as a 'problem'? Have you ever thought that the education system and schools may be the problem? What are the implications of this shift in understanding for you as a teacher? Make a note of your ideas in your Programme Notebook.



### Comment

*Inclusion accepts students for who they are and requires that schools and systems change to accommodate their needs, rather than the reverse. Inclusive education moves away from the idea of the child as a problem to the idea of an education system that takes account of individual differences and needs and works constructively to enable all students to reach their full potential.*

Inclusive education is about changing the education system and improving schools to better meet the diverse needs of all learners. Underlying the inclusive approach is the assumption that all students have a right to participate in a regular school. This requires a radical shift in thinking, attitudes and action and involves changes in the nature and delivery of content, approaches, structures and strategies. It also requires examining current attitudes and practices in our schools so that we can reduce barriers to learning for all students.

To sum up, inclusive education:

- acknowledges that all children can learn;
- seeks to address the learning needs of all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, gender, socioeconomic status, psychosocial or health needs, with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion;
- is a process – a search to find better ways of responding to diversity;
- about learning how to appreciate differences and learn from diversity;
- is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers to learning and participation;
- need not be restricted by large class sizes or a shortage of material resources;
- is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society.

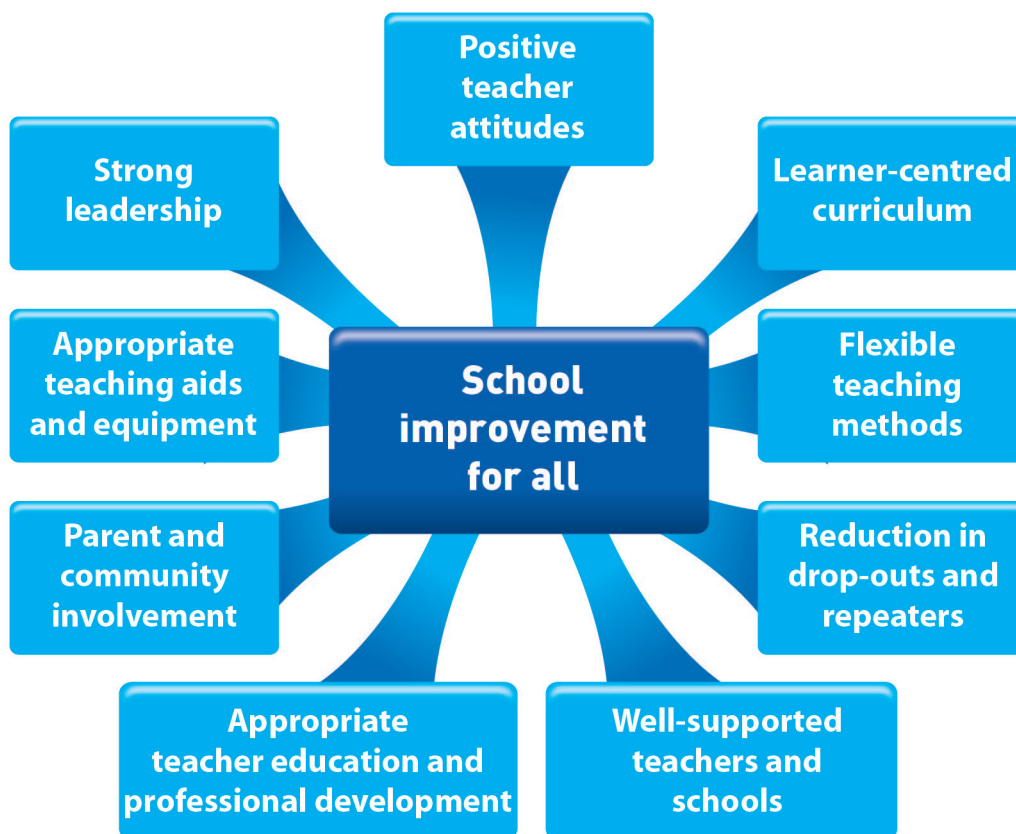


Figure 68: School improvement requires attention at many levels.

Understanding inclusive education in this way relates very much to what we have explored in the previous Modules; this Unit develops these ideas further. Read Case Study 34 to explore the idea of inclusion in practice.



### Case study 34

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Hasan teaches all subjects to students in his Grade 3 class at Baqa Camp Elementary School in Jordan.

Hasan loves teaching and has a parent volunteer in class to assist him. Sami, the School Principal was very pleased with the progress of every one of the students in Hasan's class, so he asked Hasan if he could share his expertise with his school colleagues. Hasan welcomed the idea and invited two teachers to observe one of his lessons.

On the day of the observation, Hasan introduced the guests to the class and asked the children to welcome them. He also told the students how proud he felt about the way they were all working.

The two observing teachers immediately noticed that the students were using the same kind of desks as other classes, but they were arranged differently to allow group work. They also noticed that students' stories and pictures were on the classroom walls and that the classroom was divided into corners for Arabic, mathematics, science and English. They also saw that there were displays of different types of educational toys and Hasan explained that these had been made by the children and their families. Overall, the classroom environment was attractive and stimulating for all the students.

Hasan started the lesson by reviewing the previous day's work. He asked the pupils what they had learned in that lesson and used very positive language, such as 'Great!', 'Well done!', 'I know you know this...' and 'Tell me more about ...'.

One of the students, a boy with very thick glasses, answered a simple question hesitantly and the rest of the class clapped for him. The observing teachers realised that the children were helping each other, rather than competing.

Next, Hasan told the class that in this lesson they would be working in groups to produce a series of statements about the differences between insects and spiders. He explained that this would help them with regards to the learning objective to be able to describe the characteristics of some groups of animals. Each group were given a large sheet of paper, a selection of pictures of different creatures and one member of the group asked to act as the scribe to write their list of characteristics for each group of animals.

As the lesson progressed, Hasan moved between the groups, facilitating the group work and supporting the parent volunteer and the children as they worked. All

the students seemed totally engaged and listened to each other's ideas. One boy who had a stammer was able to participate fully in the discussions as the children waited for him as he spoke slowly and carefully.

The two visiting teachers were very impressed with how hard the students worked and how happy they seemed to be. Hasan discussed with the teachers how they could, for example, think about the way they worked and whether it supported the learning of all children. After the lesson, the School Principal arranged a staff meeting for Hasan to share his experience of an inclusive classroom. This was the start of a whole-school commitment to plan and implement a more inclusive approach.



Figure 69: Exchanging classroom visits and experiences with colleagues is valuable.

## Comment

Creating an inclusive school is a task for the whole school. You will need to talk about what inclusion means with your colleagues as a first step to making your school more inclusive. In the Case Study, Sami, the School Principal, used Hasan's teaching approaches as the starting point for his school. By asking Hasan to share a typical lesson with his colleagues, the Principal was slowly encouraging more teachers to think about what constitutes an inclusive school.

There are many things you can do to work towards more inclusive teaching and this Module will guide you through some of the steps. It is important to keep an



open mind to ways of becoming more inclusive and to be creative and flexible in devising and using a range of strategies. The following list suggests some of the things you and your colleagues could do to strengthen inclusive teaching:

- **Take a whole-school approach:** Ensure the whole school works together and makes inclusion everyone's responsibility. Develop a school vision and values that reflect an inclusive ethos. Engage in a continuous process of school reflection and development to ensure that all students can access quality education.
- **Change attitudes:** Develop positive attitudes towards all students and use more inclusive language.
- **Improve the school and classroom environment:** Make the school environment more welcoming and accessible for all students, for example by using more visual aids and displays and making the classroom accessible for those with physical disabilities.
- **Identify and remove barriers to learning and participation:** Develop your ability to identify each students' individual learning needs through techniques such as observation and questioning students about their work. Differentiate tasks for different groups and use more able students to support others. You may need to enrich, extend and/or adapt the curriculum to meet diverse learning needs, for example breaking down a concept into small steps for some students.
- **Improve your classroom practice:** Develop a range of strategies to help students access learning, such as using visual or audio stimuli to gain students' interest. Enable the students to work and learn together by using group activities with a common outcome.
- **Allow flexibility in assessment:** Tailor assessment to meet the needs of learners, for example using student presentations to find out what they understand (see Module 3).
- **Seek out and welcome support:** Utilise all available support – teachers supporting children, children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers (see ideas suggested in Modules 1 to 3). Involve parents as partners in the education of their children and involve the community (see Module 6). Work together with other service providers and professionals.

Inclusive education is about making sure that schools are places where all learners feel welcome and happy, and where all learners are taught and cared for according to their needs. Adopting a whole-school approach to inclusion means that all staff members and learners take responsibility for creating a secure, accepting,

collaborating and stimulating community in which everyone is valued. Developing a vision and inclusive values that will be shared among all staff, children, parents and carers is important. Many changes can be made even with limited resources, for example where possible making sure a student with a physical disability is placed in a class that does not involve using stairs, and by encouraging students and staff to help each other more. And remember, changing attitudes does not cost anything!

A key to inclusion is to start thinking differently about the way you interact with your colleagues, your learners and their parents/carers. Talking positively and avoiding labelling a child is easy if you always refer to the child as a person first, rather than against a limited criteria related to passing tests. For example, 'Saif is a quiet child who lacks confidence in mathematics' is far more acceptable than calling him 'bad' at mathematics. Never judge the child, judge the action. If a child misbehaves, for example, the child is not 'naughty'; it is the behaviour that was inappropriate and the child needs help to modify their behaviour. Activity 39 explores the language of inclusivity and exclusivity.

### Activity 39

Read the following expressions. Circle those words and expressions that you consider reflect inclusive, positive language and strike through the ones that you think reflect negative language and attitudes.



This child cannot learn	All children can learn	Slow	Lazy	Exceptional
Child with a disability	Disabled child	Mentally retarded	There is nothing I can do to help this child	Barriers to learning
This child needs my support	Unable to learn	Learning needs	Unique	Failed
A problem	Stupid	Psychosocial needs	Behaviour problem	That's wrong!
Could you still think about the answer?	Could you think of another example?	Can't you get anything right?	SEN child	We need to change this child
We need to change the way we teach	Diverse needs	Handicapped	This child needs my help	Crippled

Figure 70: Inclusive education means changing the language we use.

Compare and discuss your answers with your colleagues. Can you come up with more inclusive expressions? Make a poster of inclusive expressions and display it in your school's staff room.



Figure 71: School staff meetings are a good place to start to begin developing a more inclusive approach to attitudes and ideas about education and students.

## Comment



Some of the words and phrases shown are very obviously inclusive and easy to identify, such as 'A child with a physical impairment' or 'All children can learn', but identifying others is not so easy as it may depend on how the term is used. For example, saying a child has 'a problem' could be more inclusive if we said 'This child has a problem that we need to help her with' rather than saying 'This is a problem child'. The statement that all children can learn is very true, but as a teacher you have to adapt the way you teach so that you help each child access the curriculum in a way that best suits their learning needs.

*Changing the way you talk to children, as well as introducing other strategies to help all children learn well, is also an important way forward.*

The next section explores barriers to learning and will help you reflect more on what to do in the classroom to reduce any barriers to learning and participation that your students may face.

## Understanding about barriers to learning

Some barriers to learning and development come from impairments or disabilities, but many more result from deprivation in both the home and school environments. For example, deprivation could take the form of neglect, where children are not looked after well or where parents/carers are not interested in their education, or it could involve actual physical abuse. Low self-esteem and lack of motivation are also common barriers to learning. These may be brought about through a child's negative self-image, challenges they face at home or in the wider community, or in the school itself, where teachers may have unrealistic expectations of what the children should be able to do. Some students have low achievement even though they have the ability to make progress and achieve. Gifted children may also lack motivation because the set tasks are not challenging and stimulating enough to meet their needs. The nature of the environment in which our children are living may cause barriers to learning. Poverty, conflict and violence can cause depression, fear and anxiety, which themselves result in difficulties in learning. While we cannot cure disabilities and impairments or influence the child's home environment, the school environment can be changed so that it actively reduces the negative effects of these barriers for the children.

Barriers to learning include:

- impairments and disabilities;
- deprivation of basic needs and access to education;
- depression, fear and anxiety;
- low self-esteem;
- lack of motivation;
- negative attitudes of teachers;
- teaching methods that do not meet the needs of the children;
- lack of stimulating school and classroom environments;
- unrealistic expectations of students.

### Activity 40

Think of the students in your class. Which of these barriers do some of them face? What other barriers to learning and participation can you think of? Choose four students in your class for whom you have concerns and make notes in your Programme Notebook about which barriers may be affecting their attitudes, behaviour and learning outcomes.







## Comment

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*There are many ways schools and teachers inadvertently (we hope) create barriers to learning. Teachers, for example, may not check properly to see if each student is able to follow and participate in the lessons. Students who have difficulty with reading might be given reading tasks that are too complex or without the necessary support to complete them. Or students with a language difficulty, such as a stammer, may be laughed at when they try to answer a question in class. Some students are just not really involved. Common barriers to learning include the teacher's attitudes, behaviour and teaching methods. Sometimes there is an unpleasant atmosphere in the classroom that does not help learners feel part of what is taking place.*

Case Study 35 shows how one teacher's regular observations of a new student helped her to settle in the class.



## Case study 35

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Haneen is a Grade 3 student who is small, plump and wears a hearing aid. She recently transferred to the Amman North Camp School in Jordan and her records from her previous school show her to be a good pupil with high marks.

During her first week at the school, Haneen interacted well in lessons and tried her best to fit in. However, she did not make friends very easily and was often on her own at break time and tried to stay in class rather than go out.

After a couple of weeks, she suddenly became withdrawn and seemed to lose her confidence completely. She started to get poor marks, although she had been learning well previously. She no longer participated in classroom activities, and avoided eye contact when talking to the teacher or to other children. She began to have unexplained headaches or stomach aches and missed a few days of school. Her teacher, Mona, was unhappy with the way Haneen's behaviour seemed to have changed and wanted to help. She thought that there must be a reason for the changes, which she tried to find out.

Mona began by watching Haneen in class and in the playground and by talking to her. Mona eventually realised that Haneen was scared of some of the students in her class. Quietly she found out who these children were and that they had been calling Haneen names and threatening to hurt her. Mona then did several things to make sure that the bullying would not continue. She spoke to Haneen about the problem and involved her in planning what to do. They agreed that Mona would talk to the students involved together and also individually about what they were doing and explain what the consequences would be if such behaviour

continued. Mona met with Haneen each day to check that all was well. She saw the group who had been responsible for the bullying each day and noted down any issues or misdemeanours in a diary she kept. She talked through with them how they might feel if this had happened to them. The students knew that their parents would be called in if the bullying did not stop and the School Principal would be involved too.



*Figure 72: One-on-one support to students can help them overcome issues at school and provide them with the confidence to deal with problems.*

The bullying stopped and Haneen slowly became part of the class and seemed much happier. At this point, Mona spoke to the whole class about welcoming new students and helping them settle in. She asked for volunteers to befriend any new class members who may come, and talked about what this might involve them doing.

A few weeks later, she told a story to the whole class about a boy who was bullied and asked the students to think about how they would feel if they were that boy, and also to think how they could help the boy if he was in their class. They discussed their responses as a class. She also talked about different types of bullying and how these could occur in the class, in the playground and out of school.

She told the whole class that any bullying was not tolerated in school and would be dealt with severely.



## Comment

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*Bullying often takes the form of name calling, rejection or aggressive behaviour that is hurtful and deliberate. Bullying can be verbal and/or physical. It may continue for weeks, months, or even years. Without help, it is often difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Threats and fear can prevent children from learning and may even lead to absenteeism. Therefore, schools need to take bullying very seriously and find ways of recognising bullying and developing policies to deal with such unacceptable behaviour.*

Students who are bullied may:

- suddenly lose confidence;
- avoid eye contact and become quiet;
- achieve poorly (but were learning well previously);
- complain of unexpected headaches or stomach aches;
- begin to attend school irregularly.

Helping children who are not achieving as well as expected – for whatever reason – is an important part of the teacher’s role. To do this, the teacher needs to observe the child as they work, as they play and also look at their work and talk with them about any difficulties they are having. Activity 41 asks you to observe children as they work and try to identify any barriers to learning in your classroom.



## Activity 41

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Spend some time over the next few days observing your class as they work and making a list in your Programme Notebook of possible barriers to learning and participation that you have identified. Also, ask the students themselves to tell you what makes learning difficult for them and what would make it easier.

Then, decide (either yourself or together with your students) to make three small changes in your classroom arrangement, teaching methods or your language and attitudes towards students. These might be things such as, letting the children talk to each other about their work, giving them more time to answer a question, or by going more slowly through the lesson. Write down what you aim to change. Introduce the changes one by one and make observations of their impact on the children. What are the children’s reactions? Do you notice any differences in their learning and participation?

Make a list of the changes you decide to make and display it somewhere to remind yourself. For example:

*In my class...*

- *I will welcome my students every morning and start the day with an informal chat to find out how they are.*
- *I will arrange the students in three groups and every day give special attention to one group to check their understanding while the other groups are doing group work and independent work.*
- *I will no longer shout at the students. I will introduce a sign, which means 'keep quiet and listen now'.*

Add the list of changes to your Programme Notebook and after you have introduced each action into your teaching and tried it for a few days, reflect on the difference it has made.

### **Comment**

*Difficulties in learning often arise from unsuitable environments – inappropriate grouping of students, inflexible teaching methods and/or an inaccessible curriculum. There are many changes that you can incorporate into your classroom environment to make it more inclusive. The three ideas that you have tried above are the start of the process towards a more inclusive classroom.*



### **Inclusive classroom practice**

The physical environment, ways to group learners, and active and child-centred learning have all been discussed in previous Modules. Using a more inclusive approach to teaching, by developing communication skills, managing the class more effectively and managing behaviour more positively and actively will not only help any learners with difficulties, but will benefit all the children in the class.

Most children appreciate structures and routines in the classroom, as this makes the school day more understandable and predictable, and instils a feeling of security and continuity. Students with difficulties in learning, communication and behaviour will particularly benefit from structures and routines. Such routines make it easier for you as the teacher to manage behaviour and keep the classroom organised. Similarly, ensuring that lessons are well structured will help students to focus on the essential learning content. Here are four examples of structures and routines that could be used to help manage your class.

- **Circle time:** Circle time can be used to introduce a new topic, to discuss ideas or to have an informal talk at the start of the lesson. Students learn that circle time means it's time to pay attention to the person speaking. To make this easier for the students, you can pass an object around the circle – only the person holding the object may speak. Others must listen and wait for their turn.
- **Daily calendar:** Display a calendar on the classroom wall with days of the week, months, weather, attendance, birthdays and holidays marked. This can be used to start the lesson ("What day is today?" "What day was it yesterday/tomorrow?" "Which month?" "Who is at school today?" "Whose birthday is it today?") and will help students to learn important time concepts, relate to others and sight-read common words.
- **A visual timetable:** A daily or weekly visual timetable will help your pupils to orientate themselves in the school day. Knowing what will happen next will help concentrate students' minds. You can also display a card for each session's timetable on the board. Go through the timetable with your students so they know what to expect during the day or during the session. An arrow could be moved according to the different activities as they happen, as illustrated below.
- **Key words for lesson structure:** Structuring your lesson will be much easier if you display some key words and phrases that learners will quickly recognise to help them focus on the important learning content. The following are examples of the kinds of key words that could be displayed and used.



Figure 73: A visual timetable can help students understand school structures and routines.

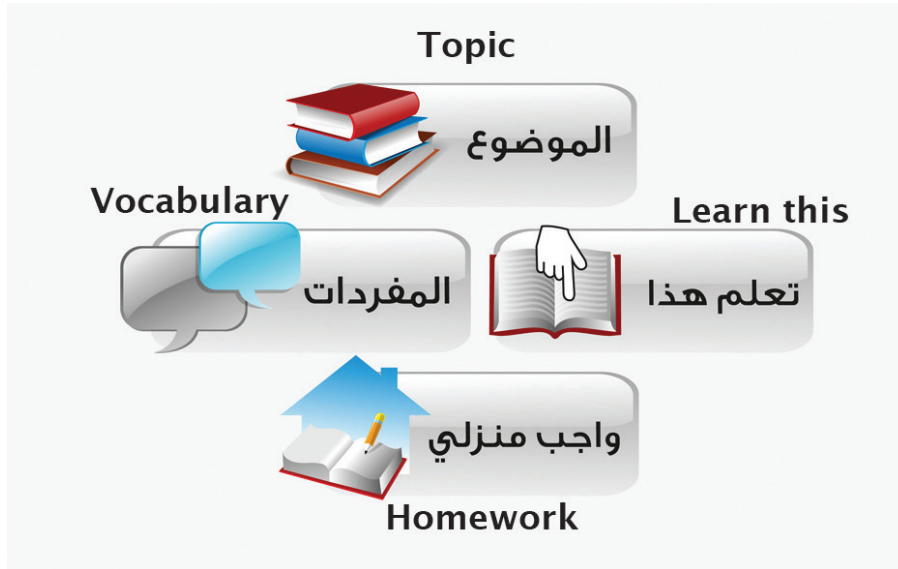


Figure 74: Using and repeating key words and phrases can add structure to activities and help consolidate understanding.

The way you plan your lesson and the resources you use, as well as the way you communicate and interact with your class, can make a huge difference to how successfully the children engage in the lesson and learning.

For example, children need to process and memorise a great deal of information at school. Helping children develop effective memory strategies will make this task easier. The following techniques are some that you could use.

- Students remember better when they hear, see, touch and try out things for themselves.
- Students remember better when they memorise something that is related to an action, movement or activity. Devising and playing a game that involves having to mime actions from information on a card will help students to remember better. For example, when looking at how animals move, students mime different ways of moving, such as showing that fish swim with two pairs of lateral fins, and the tail fin acts as a rudder to guide them through the water. Using images particularly helps some children remember better. For example, when teaching about carnivorous animals, using good pictures as well as a good description will help some children to visualise the animal in their minds when they need to recall the information.

Another aspect of inclusive classroom practice is good classroom management. Good classroom management is built on positive relationships and making lessons interesting and engaging for children. It is important to have boundaries for social behaviour so that everyone is clear about what is and what is not regarded as responsible and safe in a particular context. To help develop clear expectations, it

may be useful to have classroom rules that you and your students have developed and agreed on together. Rules should be written in a positive form, for example, 'Keep your hands and feet to yourself' instead of 'No hitting'. It is also important that you refer to the rules frequently and if a student breaks a classroom rule they should be asked to identify which rule they broke and what the correct behaviour should be. Most important is that teachers model how to act responsibly and interact with colleagues and students in appropriate ways. If a teacher shouts and uses negative language, then they cannot expect their students to be polite and keep quiet. As we discussed earlier, it is the behaviour that is inappropriate not the child and so developing strategies to turn behaviours around is crucial for you as a teacher to help develop and strengthen the children's self esteem as a person and as a learner.

The next Case Study illustrates how one teacher used circle time to help solve a behaviour problem in one of his classes.

### Case study 36



Saif was a teacher of a Grade 4 class and had one boy, Jamal, in the class who constantly interrupted the children at work and even in playtime, by breaking up games and bullying many of the children. Saif had spoken with Jamal about his bad behaviour and for a short time things improved. However, they soon relapsed into the same pattern. Saif felt that he was always telling Jamal off, and the rest of the class were fed up with Jamal and moaned every time he started to annoy them. Nobody was enjoying their time at school. Saif decided that he needed to act.

He talked with another teacher to get advice and also talked to Jamal's parents. It was agreed that Saif would instigate a series of rewards for Jamal's good behaviour and use a loss of break time as a caution for bad behaviour. Jamal would also have a behaviour diary that he would take home each day so that his parents could read how the day had gone and comment on it. This would contain notes from Saif about Jamal's behaviour that day and also any comments Jamal wanted to make himself about his behaviour. It was agreed that they would review progress in a few weeks. Saif also decided to introduce a weekly 'circle time' into his class routines as a way to discuss class problems and issues. First, Saif used circle time to discuss his proposal to change the class seating arrangements from rows to blocks of desks and how this would enable them to work with others more and help each other. He told the class it would happen in a few weeks.

At the next circle time, Saif asked the students to talk about what they liked in class and what they would like to change. A paperweight was passed round the circle until one child with their back to the circle called 'stop'. Then the student holding

it at this time gave their ideas. Several students spoke about some children not being as responsible as others. Saif asked them what could they do together to address this issue. They suggested that the class could have sanctions that could be imposed such as cutting short break time or missing story time if children misbehaved. Saif also asked them to think of positive ways of encouraging good behaviour. He was pleased with the list of suggestions the children produced and put them in place the next day.



Figure 75: Saif's four step process can help address learning behaviours.

One suggestion was a sticker reward system. Saif already used stickers on students' work to show when it was good but now he used stickers as a reward for good behaviour too. Saif also made more effort to praise children when they did something well or were kind and helpful or behaved well. Jamal responded slowly to the new system and was very indignant when he had time deducted from his break one day. However, he was more careful from then on not to do anything to lose his break time. Very slowly, Jamal began to join in more constructively with activities and playing outside. The real pleasure for Saif – and for Jamal too – was when he wrote a story about learning to work and play better that was read out to the class. Jamal's parents read the story too and wrote in the diary how they pleased they were with Jamal's progress and thanked Saif.

Saif continued to use circle time to discuss similar issues with the class and let them have a say in how these problems were resolved.





## Comment

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*The strategies Saif used helped not only Jamal but the other students, Jamal's parents and Saif himself as well! You may have had, or still do have, students like Jamal in your class and some of these strategies may help you. You may want to add some of your own ideas to those listed above. There are many more strategies that you could use, and to find out more about these you can talk with colleagues and read some of the literature on managing behaviour.*

The next Activity asks you to think more deeply about what you do in your classroom.



## Activity 42

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You will have gathered a number of ideas from this Unit on how to make your teaching more inclusive. Reflect on your current understanding of inclusive education and try to answer the following questions to help you plan how to organise your teaching in a more inclusive way. You can do this Activity on your own, but it will be better if you can work with your colleagues and students.

Begin by reading the questions yourself and make notes of your responses in your Programme Notebook. Then, ideally with your class or a colleague, set a time to explore your perceptions of your classroom and how you and the students together could make it more interesting. Consider the questions below and make a note of your responses in your Programme Notebook. (You could also use the questions later to help structure a follow-up discussion when you have had chance to make some changes.)

### 1. Classroom environment

- What does it look like when you first enter? Is it welcoming, interesting, attractive and stimulating?
- What could you do to enhance the classroom immediately?
- What could you do that might need more time and resources? Where could you get help for this?
- What special provision do you need to make in the classroom environment to meet any special educational needs?

### 2. Management and organisation

- Think about the regular routines you use in your class and what messages they give to learners.

- Is the way the class works respectful of all students in your class?
- How can you organise or reorganise the furniture in the classroom to make it easier for children to move around more easily and to change working patterns without too much disruption?
- How can you make it easier for children to access resources, share their work and celebrate successes?

Use your Programme Notebook to record the key changes you are planning to make, when and in what order. Then, use your Notebook to reflect on how the process went and how the students responded to being asked for their ideas.

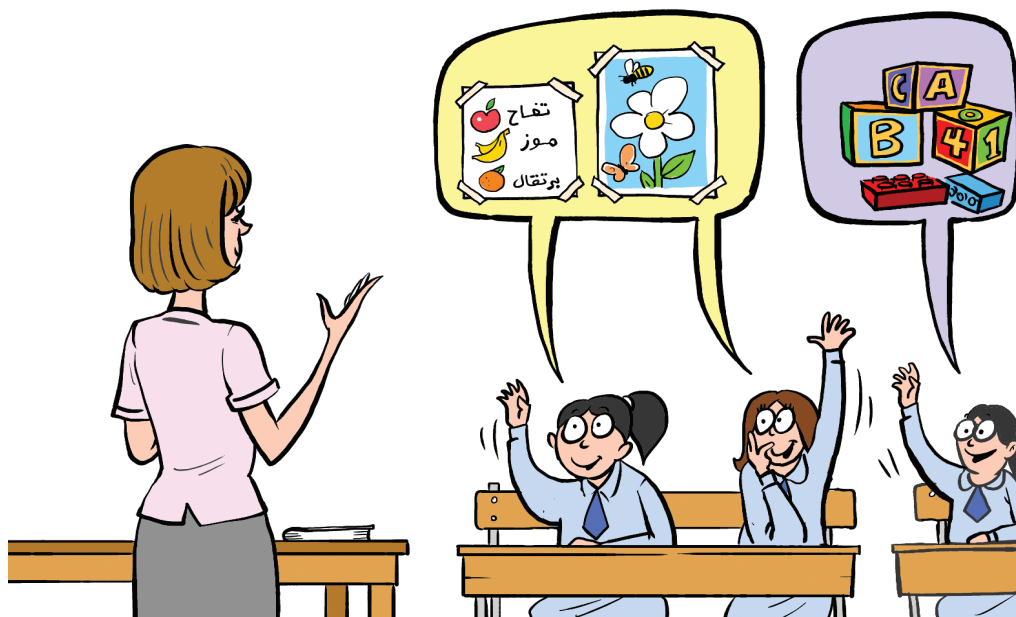


Figure 76: Reflect on what went well or less well in a lesson.

## Comment

*Working with a colleague can be very supportive and enables you to share successes and also think about those actions you have taken that have perhaps not worked as well. Sharing such experiences allows you to explore what you could do differently or how you might modify the Activity. Talking through ideas with another person who understands the context in which you work will stimulate ideas and alternative solutions. Your students too may have surprised you with the sensible suggestions they had to make the classroom more inclusive and efficient. Most young people are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their world and so can be a great source of information and ideas.*



The old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved' applies well in the context of the previous Activity. It also applies when talking to parents and the next section explores this in more detail.

## Working with parents and communities towards inclusive education

Obtaining the support and involvement of families and local communities is essential in introducing inclusive practices into your school and classroom. If you have the support of parents and carers, they can follow up the ideas and actions at home as well. Many barriers to learning may arise from home and the community and their perceptions of what the school does. So it is very important that from early on parents are informed of why and how you are making changes to the way you teach and the way the school operates. It is important to introduce the key ideas of what inclusive education is about – especially that every child has worth and potential and that it is the school's duty to help them achieve that potential. This could be done through a parents' evening or workshop and/or by sending out a letter to all parents explaining why and how the school is to become an inclusive school. Introducing parents to more inclusive, positive language when talking to their children will help them support you at home. Some parents/carers will need help to understand that children who perform poorly at school need support, not punishment! It is important to include parents in the programme of change towards more inclusive practices, as this will be beneficial for the students.

Once parents understand the inclusive approach to education, they can make a range of contributions. In particular, they have knowledge of their children in a way teachers might not and this could help teachers plan better-matched learning activities for their students. Successful partnerships with families can be developed if both teachers and families understand and respect each other's roles in such partnerships. Although it can take time to develop, trust between the school and parents is vital to support the children's learning.

There are many ways to involve parents and the community in the school. A list of some suggestions is below.

- Arrange a meeting with parents and community members to discuss the inclusive approach to education and how they can support it.
- Have advocacy materials such as posters and brochures to display and send home.
- Meet with parents/carers on a regular basis to discuss children's progress and ways forward. Make sure that it is clear that the meeting is to discuss their child's education and not about blaming anyone, but finding ways to support the child.
- Have an 'open door' policy at your school and in your class so that parents feel they can come and talk with you if they have concerns about their

child's schooling. You might have a time each week when parents can drop in without an appointment.

- Invite parents and community members into class to observe your lessons.
- Ask parents and community members to volunteer at the school and in the classroom.
- Encourage community members to identify 'out of school children' and follow up each case to work at getting the student back into school.

This list of ways to involve parents more in school will need the support of the Head Teacher/School Principal and careful introduction within school over time. However, the impact on children's progress will be significant. Research on parental involvement in their children's education either directly in school and/or at home shows it has a significant impact on their achievement.

The next Activity suggests a possible starting point for involving parents more – by having a meeting to share information.

### Activity 43

As a school or year group, arrange with the Head Teacher/School Principal to hold a parents' meeting to introduce parents/carers to the key ideas of inclusion that you have been exploring in this Unit. You could carry out this meeting with colleagues to share responsibilities.



Make a plan, outlining the following:

- the aim of the meeting;
- the date and time of the meeting;
- where the meeting will be held;
- which teachers will be present and who will do what.

You will need to consider the following questions as you plan:

- What topics will be discussed and what activities will there be for the parents, if any?
- What resources will be needed for the meeting?
- What time will you allow for questions and comments? Who will answer these?
- How will you get feedback about the meeting from all those involved?



Figure 77: Meetings with parents and carers should be planned and have clear objectives.

At the meeting, you may want to discuss topics such as inclusive language and attitudes, positive behaviour management, removing barriers to learning and key elements of inclusive education. When choosing which topics to include, and how to present them, think about the parents of the students in your class and what you would like them to understand. For example, with some parents it may be necessary to discuss why corporal punishment is harmful for a child, while for other parents they may need to be exposed to a more positive way of thinking about children with disabilities.

You can utilise some of the Activities and Case Studies presented in this Unit with the parents to promote discussion and help them explore the ideas involved. Encourage parents to talk and ask questions. In the meeting you could put them in groups to discuss. Most importantly, show that you are there to help their children and to find ways to work together!

Add the plan to your Programme Notebook. After the meeting, reflect yourself on how the meeting went and list your next steps for developing your links with parents/carers.

## Comment

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*Holding such a meeting can be a very positive way forward, but much will depend on how many attend and how well parents/carers understand what you are trying to do. It is important therefore that your planning is clear and that your aims for the meeting are clear. Try not to do too much in one meeting. These early steps are crucial and should not be rushed. But if you work together and learn together, the impact will be greater.*



## Summary

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This double Unit set out to increase your understanding of what inclusive education is all about. It has explored the key elements of inclusion and what steps you could take to make your school and classroom more inclusive. Inclusion is a process that starts with a single step! Exploring perceptions of your classroom will have helped you gain insights into how the classroom and school seem to colleagues, students and parents/carers. With this knowledge you will be better able to reflect on how to address any perceptions that make the classroom less inclusive and apply the different strategies and approaches that have been suggested.



Much can be done even with limited resources – what is needed is a positive attitude, creativity and some skills. The next Units are about increasing your skills of identification of learning needs and strategies to ensure all students are supported.



## Module 5 Unit 19

# Identifying the diverse needs of learners

### Introduction

Within the classes you teach it is likely that there are some students in your classroom who seem to have difficulties in learning, who aren't achieving as expected or whose behaviour is a concern to you. The purpose of this Unit is to describe some key learning needs and possible problems in learning that these students may have. Being aware of possible barriers to learning and being able to recognise learning needs will help you to reflect on your teaching practice and be more responsive to the diverse needs of your students. This is an important step towards a more inclusive approach to teaching and learning, which is the theme of this Module.

### Teacher development outcomes

By the end of this Unit you will have developed your:

- knowledge and understanding of the diverse needs students may have resulting from disabilities, impairments, deprivation and other factors;
- ability to identify effectively the different needs of students, including learning, psycho-social and health needs.

### Definitions

All students have different and diverse needs that can affect their learning and development. Some needs are directly related to the teaching and learning process while other needs are psycho-social or health related. In this Unit we use the phrase 'learning needs' to refer to all these various needs.

Throughout the previous Modules you have already been introduced to many key elements of good quality, student-centred education. Some students may need additional learning support or psycho-social support, and sometimes the health needs of a student need to be addressed first to enable learning and development to happen. Students who still face difficulties despite the additional support given may have special educational needs (SEN), which require more extensive support. Sometimes, but not always, a student who needs additional or extensive support may have an impairment or disability. The diagram below models the three levels of support available to all students in inclusive schools but most students will not need the third level of support.

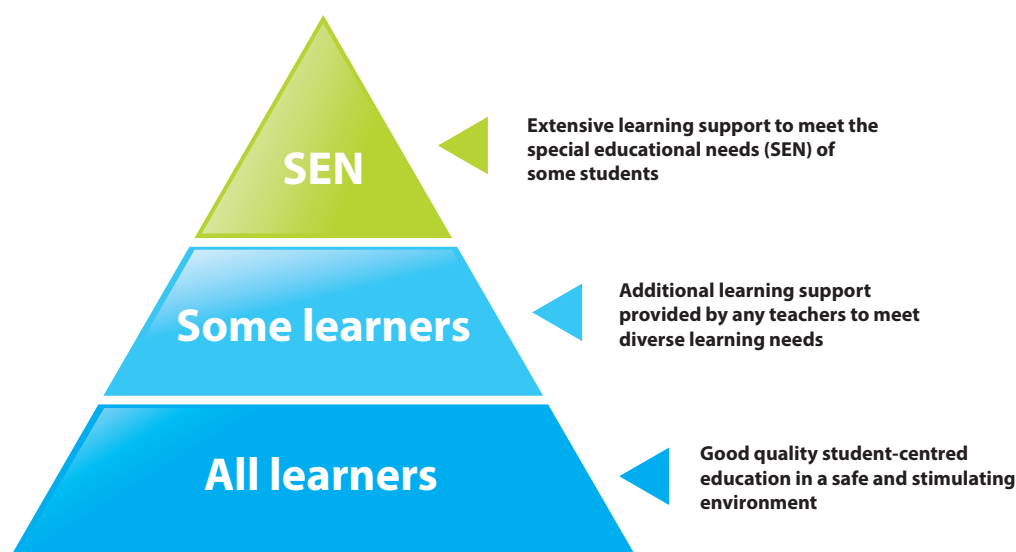


Figure 78: UNRWA Inclusive Education Support Model.

### Understanding diverse learning needs

In the previous Unit you learned about the importance of identifying possible barriers to learning and development and trying to reduce the negative effects that these barriers can have on student progress. In addition, it is important to identify the needs of the students who face difficulties in learning. Identifying these needs is the first step towards changing your teaching practice to meet the diverse needs of all your students and to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Some needs are easy to identify. For example, it is easy to see that a student who walks with crutches needs more time and space to be able to move around. Other needs may not be so easy to identify and will require you to look at the behaviours and responses of students. For example, if you have a student who is slow to respond to questions, you may need to find out whether the student has a hearing problem, finds it difficult to concentrate or perhaps does not understand the question.

You do not need to be a doctor or psychologist to be able to identify learning needs. As a teacher, you cannot and should not attempt to diagnose a student as having dyslexia, autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), for example. But what you do need to do, is to observe the student and identify their learning needs regardless of the underlying impairment or other factor(s) causing them difficulties. Therefore, being aware of a range of impairments, disabilities and difficulties is important, as it is then easier for you to identify the student's specific learning needs and possibly refer them for further assessment with a social worker, counsellor, nurse, doctor or psychologist.



Remember that you, as a teacher, are an education specialist. Other professionals may be able to give advice about how to manage particular disabilities within the classroom, but the best person to identify learning needs is you! Talking with your colleagues and sharing observations will help you to identify learning needs.

Most learning needs can be met by any teacher who recognises the student's problems and changes their teaching methods to respond to the needs of the student. It is every teacher's responsibility to support the learning and development of their students and to provide extra support if necessary. However, some learning needs may be more complex and may require extensive support. In order to meet these special educational needs, teamwork and support for the teacher is crucial. The initial source of additional support to meet special educational needs will be the Student Support Team in your school who will assist a class teacher to find solutions to meet the needs of a specific student. (Remember, also, that some students might have additional learning needs because they are especially gifted and not because they find learning difficult.)

### **School-based Student Support Team**

A new structure, called the Student Support Team, is to be established in each school, as part of UNRWA's inclusive approach to education. The aim of the team is to ensure that students with additional learning needs, psycho-social needs and health needs are accommodated effectively within UNRWA schools, and that teachers get the necessary guidance and support to help these students.



*Figure 79: Student Support Teams are important in ensuring that UNRWA implements a consistent approach to inclusive education across all schools.*

The Student Support Team will need to meet regularly to discuss individual cases of students referred to the team's attention and also to invite teachers to talk about their students and the challenges they face in teaching. The team consists of the Head Teacher/School Principal, teacher counsellor, health tutor, learning support teacher and/or any other teachers or support staff who are interested in the well-being of the students. (For more details refer to the UNRWA Inclusive Education Policy.)

### Case study 37

Esam teaches Grade 4 in Rimal Elem Co Ed School, Gaza.



Esam had a class of 35 boys who were lively, but mostly very interested in their work. He enjoyed teaching them as they responded well to the variety of activities and strategies that he used. But one boy, Tareq, was usually very quiet in class and often off-task. If any of the other boys told Tareq to get on with his work or were cross with him, he reacted very quickly and often hit out for what were really only minor comments. Esam spoke to the teacher who had taught Tareq the previous year and found out that he had behaved in a similar way, but that the teacher just sent him out of the class to do his work until he had calmed down. This teacher had not talked with Tareq much, except to make him apologise to the other students when necessary and he also commented that Tareq's work was often unfinished and below the level he could achieve.

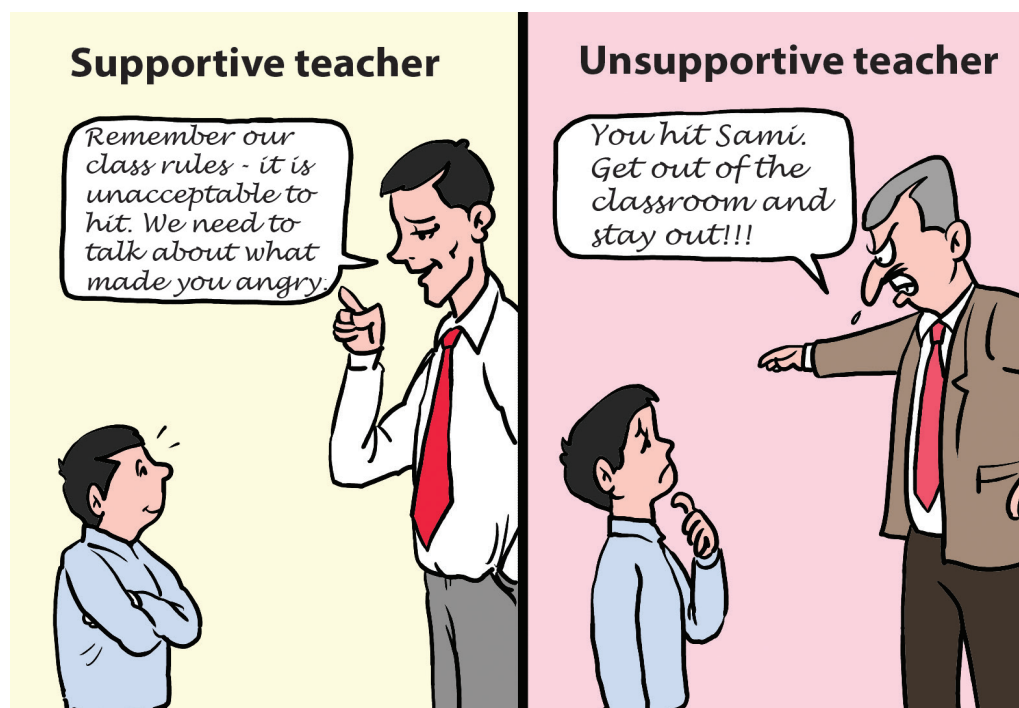


Figure 80: It is important for teachers to have a positive influence on student development.

Esam however wanted to do more for Tareq and so he looked at the school records to see if there was any information that might help. He found a note from another colleague which said that Tareq's father had died when he was only four years old and that Tareq had behaved badly ever since. To find out more, Esam asked the School Principal to arrange for a meeting with Tareq's mother. At the meeting, his mother told Esam that she had been very distraught when her husband passed away and she had also had to go out to work to feed the family. From this time onwards she noticed that Tareq gradually withdrew into himself and lost friends, and his mother said she found it very hard to talk with him. She was pleased that the teachers wanted to help with his schooling and behaviour.

After the meeting, Esam met the School Principal to talk more about Tareq. Together they drew up a list of warning signs and barriers they had observed, and then thought about the corresponding learning needs:

Warning signs/ barriers:	Learning needs:
<p>father died</p> <p>very quiet in class</p> <p>off task and can be aggressive</p> <p>difficulty completing work</p> <p>difficulty concentrating</p> <p>gets upset and aggressive when prompted to work</p> <p>poor learning achievement</p> <p>no friends, difficulties socialising</p> <p>teachers who didn't know how to support him</p>	<p>→ Someone to talk to about his feelings and experiences</p> <p>→ support in participating in class</p> <p>→ support to concentrate on work and complete it</p> <p>→ strategies to control his behaviour</p> <p>→ motivation and encouragement</p> <p>→ having friends, socialising with others</p> <p>→ teachers who are supportive and willing to help</p>

**Comment**



Recognising barriers, warning signs and difficulties helps you identify the learning needs of a student. Note how the warning signs and barriers in Tareq's case were changed to learning needs. Do you notice how identifying the student's learning needs will guide on what to do next to support him? In Tareq's case, the previous teacher may have just labelled him as 'naughty' but the new teacher, Esam, understood that Tareq had psycho-social needs that needed to be addressed to support him in his learning and development.

The first Activity in this Unit asks you to select a student who is causing you concern and to begin to investigate their needs.

### Activity 44

You could do this Activity on your own or together with a colleague.



Choose a student in your class whose learning and development is a concern to you. Observe the student for one week as often as you can. Use your Programme Notebook to write down what you see the student doing or not doing. Try not to be judgemental as you write, but record what you actually see happening. As you collect a range of observations you will begin to see a pattern or patterns in what the student does. From this, you will be able to see what some of the student's problems with learning are. Make a list of the warning signs and barriers you identify from your data. Think how you can adapt your teaching to help the student at school. Remember what Esam did in Case Study 37 as an example. Make notes of your investigation and the learning needs you have identified and how you might help this student in your Programme Notebook.

Plan how you will support this student over the next week and then carry out your plan. At the end of the week, use your Programme Notebook to reflect on how well the strategies you used worked. How did the student respond to your different approach? Did the student understand better? How do you know this?

### Comment

*Observing students at work in the classroom and listening to them as they work will give you insight into their level of understanding, their skills and competence. You can then use this information to plan the most appropriate lessons to help them achieve.*



### Identifying diverse learning needs

Recognising barriers to learning, seeing the warning signs and identifying the learning needs – and knowing why this is important – are the crucial first steps in helping students with learning difficulties.

#### **Poverty and deprivation (vulnerable students)**

Students in UNRWA schools are refugees and are affected by the conflict, displacement, violence and poverty in their communities in many ways. Some students may have witnessed violence, destruction and death. Their parents may be emotionally affected as well, which may make it hard for them to cater for their child's needs and give them the love and attention they require. Some students may have to

live in crowded or unhygienic conditions. They may not be eating a healthy diet or even getting enough food to eat because of financial problems at home. Some students have many jobs to do at home before or after school as well as doing their homework.

While it may not be possible to change the home environment and the circumstances the students are living in, it is possible to show the students that you care by giving them the attention they need. Talk to them about their feelings and hear what they have to say, build up their self-esteem and encourage and motivate them. Making the school and classroom a welcoming and safe environment in which participation, learning and playing are possible will help each student progress and open up opportunities for them.

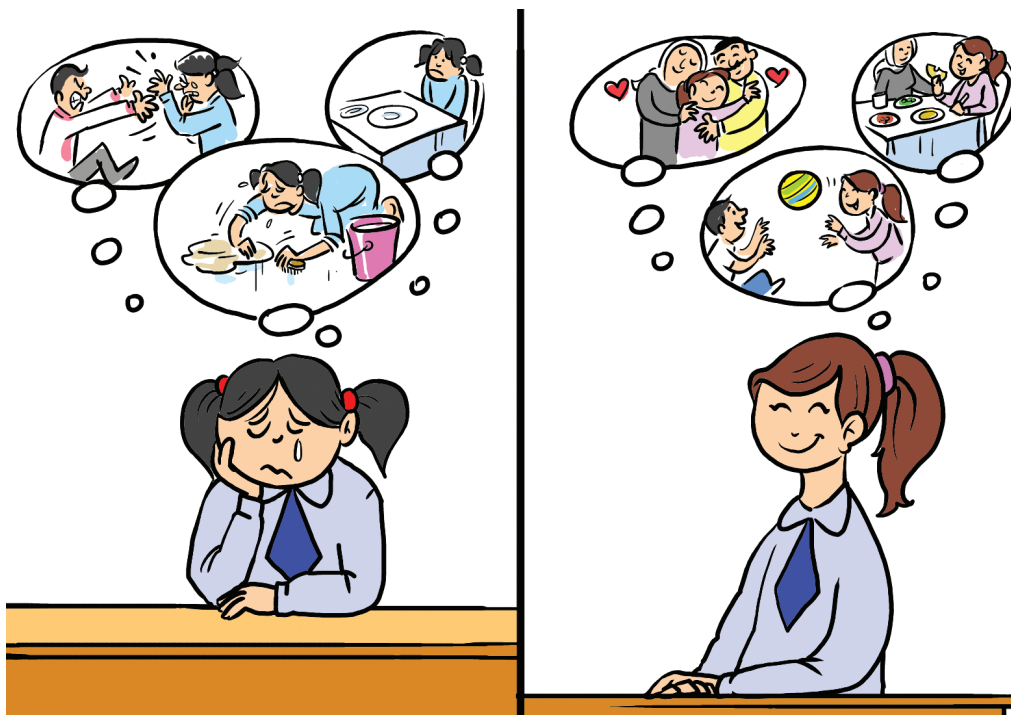


Figure 81: Students may be dealing with a number of issues in their personal or home life. These can affect their ability to learn, their classroom behaviour and performance.

### **Emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, difficulties in concentration**

There are many reasons why students experience emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties. Some of the causes are linked to those mentioned above. Other causes may be due to an attention deficit disorder (ADHD), which is likely to cause hyperactivity and short attention spans, or hypo activity, where the students may day-dream or forget what they are doing. There is some connection between foods that contain a lot of preservatives and colourants, such as crisps, fizzy drinks and some sweets and hyperactivity. When observing a learner's behaviour, it is

important to look at how often and when any of the behaviours are occurring before making a final decision about the extent of their difficulties.

### ***Specific learning difficulties***

A specific learning difficulty refers to a particular difficulty in cognitive and reasoning skills and in understanding or using language, spoken or written. Specific learning difficulties often affect a person's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. Such difficulties will affect a learner's ability to learn at the same pace as other students of the same age. Students with specific learning difficulties will make progress, but may have difficulty learning new skills, particularly in mathematics and literacy, and may need more time and support. Specific learning difficulties include impairments such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

### ***Intellectual disabilities***

Intellectual disabilities include significant difficulties with understanding and reasoning in all areas of learning. Students with intellectual disabilities have difficulties with thought processes, learning, communicating, remembering information and using it appropriately, making judgements and problem solving. An intellectual disability affects all areas of a person's development from birth to adulthood. Students with intellectual disabilities perform significantly lower and their development is significantly delayed compared to other students of the same age. Learners with intellectual disabilities will need the help of others in most of their daily activities and many may also have limited speech and communication skills. It is important to look at the development of intellectual skills, social skills and the learner's age when identifying the level of intellectual disability. Teachers might be able to identify signs and suspect that a learner has an intellectual disability, but for accurate identification it is best to refer the student for a psychological assessment. A common intellectual disability is Down's syndrome. Students with intellectual disabilities benefit from the social dimension as well as the learning environment in regular schools and classrooms. They may not be able to achieve the same academic outcomes as others, but with good support they should be able to achieve their fullest potential and benefit from mixing with a wide range of students. If you have a learner with an intellectual disability in your class, the school-based Student Support Team will assist you and decide on how best to help the learner.

### ***Exceptional intelligence, gifts and talents***

Some students may be exceptionally gifted or talented and therefore often have additional learning needs that need to be considered. Sometimes gifted students

lack the stimulation and challenges they need in the learning environment, which may result in loss of motivation and underachievement. These students may feel bored in class unless given additional activities that extend and enrich their thinking because they finish their work so quickly. This could lead to behavioural difficulties unless their needs are met in class. As a teacher plans their lessons, they need to consider the intellectual challenges that the work they are preparing provides for the more able students as well as for the less able. Just as the interest and context in which the students are placed should be considered for students with learning difficulties, it is important to consider these when planning for the more able student.

### ***Speech, language and communication difficulties***

Students may have a speech and language difficulty as a result of a neurological impairment. For example, some students with cerebral palsy may have difficulty with speaking, breath control and swallowing as a result of brain damage and poor control of the muscles around the mouth. Other students may have a stammer that causes them to have difficulty saying certain words or phrases. Some students may have delayed speech because they have had limited exposure to good speech models and language stimulation. This could be a result of a lack of social interaction within the family and the community. Some speech difficulties may also be caused by psycho-social reasons, such as trauma.

Some students may have difficulty with communication. This does not mean that they cannot speak, but that they find it hard to relate to other people and hold simple conversations. Students on the autistic spectrum disorder often have poor language and communication skills as well as poor social interaction and behaviour. They find it hard to obey classroom rules as they do not always understand the teacher's expectations, but they can sometimes have well-developed skills in specific areas.

### ***Hearing impairments***

This includes students with mild hearing loss to those who have profound hearing loss (deafness). Hearing loss could be the result of ear infections and some of these may be treatable, while others may have permanent mild hearing loss and others may be born deaf.

There are many ways you can help students who have hearing impairments. For example:

- seat the student in front, facing you;
- make sure that students don't speak at the same time;

- make sure everyone is quiet when you are giving instructions;
- articulate clearly;
- deaf students need instruction in sign language through special classes.

### ***Visual impairments and sight problems***

Students who have long or short sightedness can have these problems corrected by wearing glasses. Others may have visual impairments that cannot be corrected completely by wearing glasses. There are various degrees and types of visual impairment such as low vision, partial sight and blindness. If you have a student with a visual impairment in your class, find out as much as possible about how well the student can see. What size letters is the student able to see? Can the student see better nearer or further? Can the student see better if it's sunny or dark? Can the student see colours? Can the student recognise faces? You should refer the student for a check-up with the health tutor or to a health centre.

Students with visual impairments need teaching aids that they can touch. Some may need a stick for walking and help in getting around. Blind students may need to learn to read and write in Braille.

### ***Physical impairments***

Physical impairments may be neurological or orthopaedic. Orthopaedic impairments refer to problems related to the bones and muscle systems. Neurological impairments are related to the functions of the brain and nervous system. Neurological impairments may also cause difficulties in perception.

### ***Health concerns***

Some students may suffer from chronic illnesses and others may be sometimes or frequently sick with curable diseases caused by infections, bacteria, viruses and/or a poor immune system. It is important to find out if there are students in your class with any chronic illness and, if so, gather the necessary information about their condition. You can link up with the Health Centre and doctor here. Make sure a student who is absent from school, due to sickness, is not left behind. Send work home for the student to help them keep up if they are able. Give extra lessons when the student gets back to school.

It is important to keep in mind the fact that any student can at any time present any of the behaviours or difficulties that are described in this Unit. This does not mean, for example, that a student who occasionally does not concentrate in your lesson has a behavioural difficulty. It would be necessary to look at how often



this occurs and whether there are other signs that indicate that this student has a significant difficulty with concentration and attention. Some students may also have multiple difficulties.

Being aware of the different learning needs of the students in your class is important, and developing your skills in supporting these students is also crucial in enabling them to access the curriculum.

Sometimes it is necessary to assess the student's learning needs in more detail through a formal assessment, especially if they are exhibiting some of the symptoms described above. Learning support teachers, counsellors, psychologists, nurses and doctors may be able to do that and give you advice. Some students may need extensive support, which may sometimes be available elsewhere than at your school, including from community-based organisations, private service providers and the government. Find out where your nearest learning support unit, special class or community-based rehabilitation centre are. Visit these places to find out what kind of students they support and to get ideas for your class.

Read Case Study 38, which describes how one teacher set out to help a student in her class.

### **Case study 38**

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Dima is a student in Grade 2 at Yarmouk Camp in Syria.

Dima's teacher, Sana, noted that she was clumsy and used to bump into things easily. Dima had difficulties with reading and with writing in straight lines. When reading, she held the books very close to her face and had tears in her eyes. Sometimes she complained of headaches or itchy eyes. She couldn't catch balls when playing. Once she came to school wearing her clothes inside out. She often arranged items incorrectly and brought the wrong one when she was asked to collect something. Other teachers said that she was just 'slow' and 'couldn't learn'.

Sana wanted to help Dima. She made a list of warning signs, spoke to the School Principal and arranged for a meeting with Dima's parents so that she could describe her observations to them. Dima's parents said that Dima behaved in the same way at home and they did not think anything could be done. But Sana explained how she had talked with the support team and they had made a list of ways to help Dima. Together, Sana and Dima's parents talked about ways in which they could all support Dima.



Figure 82: Sometimes a simple solution to student difficulties is all that is needed.

The parents agreed to take Dima to have her eyes tested and to see if there was any infection in her eyes first. The results showed that Dima had very poor vision and needed treatment for an eye infection. Once this was treated, Sana then began to assess Dima's competence with the help of other professionals. This showed that she had a delay in her learning, some of it caused by her sight problem not having been diagnosed before. A plan was made to give Dima extra support. A support teacher worked with Dima on a one-to-one basis and in small groups so that she was able to progress more rapidly with her reading and writing. She was able to join in lessons with the whole class often and so maintained her friendship with her friend Sahira. Gradually Dima learnt to read, but needed books with larger print if possible. As she progressed, she became more relaxed and happier and, while she was not top of the class, she worked hard and made good progress. Dima started to feel much better about herself and also really enjoyed coming to school. Sana thought she seemed like a different student and Dima's parents were delighted and took great interest in her progress.



## Comment

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*Dima, a student who could only partially see, needed additional support to be able to learn to read and write. It was only because Sana was interested and pushed for Dima to have a better experience at school that Dima's life was changed so much. You can help students like Dima by helping them to get medical advice and then writing on the chalkboard with large letters, reading out instructions and always checking if the student can see and follow the activities. Asking another student to help a student with a visual impairment can help too. Involving the whole class in understanding the kind of things that would help someone like Dima will mean that all students will benefit from the sharing experience both socially and in their learning.*

## Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Identifying particular learning needs is the first step in starting to plan for individual support, and a useful tool for planning for individual support is to make an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the learner. When starting to make an IEP, ask for help from the school-based Student Support Team, from your colleagues and/or invite the learner's parents to school to discuss their expectations and concerns with you.

The plan could be for a specific subject or a specific skill or it could be a more general plan to support a student's learning needs, which includes learning targets and changes to your teaching. This might involve making changes to the classroom environment and materials to meet the student's needs. It may involve adapting your teaching and curriculum content by, for example, giving the learner different work from other students, leaving out some curriculum content and focusing on only the core areas of the curriculum.

Activity 45 asks you to identify a student who you think may need more support and possibly an IEP to be developed, and then helps you through the early stages of producing an IEP.

## Activity 45

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Choose a student in your class whose learning and development is a concern to you. Follow these guidelines to identify and assess their learning needs and plan for support.

1. Observe the student and find out as much as possible about their background. Talk with the student to find out more. You can also give the student simple tasks to do to assess if the student can complete them (such as a simple reading or calculation), but of course reflecting their age and stage of learning. Do you

notice any warning signs, difficulties, and barriers to learning? (Refer back to the list of barriers given earlier in this Unit.)

2. Discuss any concerns with another teacher and/or the student's parents/carers.
3. Make a list of what the student is good at and what the student needs help with.
4. Choose three main targets or skills that you want the student to achieve or accomplish.
5. Think of possible strategies or changes you could implement to support the student.
6. Think of where you would get more help for this student. List the possible sources for support and referral.

Put the completed Activity in your Programme Notebook but also follow through the process for this student so that the completed form goes in the student file and work can begin on giving the support needed.

What you have produced is an individual education plan (IEP) for the student. In the next Unit, you will learn in more detail what specific strategies could be used to provide additional learning support to this student.

## Summary

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In this Unit, you have learned some basic ideas about the identification of different barriers to learning, warning signs, difficulties and learning needs. All students may experience difficulties in learning and development at some point in time – and it is up to you as a teacher to support the learning and development of all your students – but some students will need more support throughout their education. All students need good quality, student-centered education in a safe and stimulating environment, but some need additional learning support and those with special educational difficulties need more extensive support. The first step in order to provide additional support is the identification of learning needs.





## Module 5 Unit 20

# Supportive teaching and learning strategies

### Introduction

Good teaching and learning strategies make a huge difference to every child in the class, regardless of their abilities, interests and background. But for some children there is a need for more particular strategies to help them overcome particular learning barriers.

We have discussed a range of ways to engage children in their learning in previous Modules. This Unit will extend your knowledge of additional learning support strategies that will help you to meet the diverse learning needs of some children and apply them in inclusive classrooms. This Unit will also further strengthen your knowledge of the different ways children learn and the importance of reflecting this in the learning process.

There is always a need to build flexibility into all lessons to enable you to cater for the needs of all your students. At times, you may give extra support to some groups and the resources you will use may vary depending on their needs and the task in hand. At other times, you may change your pace of teaching and the ways in which you communicate. Providing meaningful learning support may mean breaking down tasks into more manageable steps or sections. It may mean using different resources that allow the child, or a small group of children, to have more practical hands-on activities to help them understand concepts more easily. It could be about the kind of classroom environment that you create, in order to limit distractions or to provide stimulation. It could also be about the classroom management strategies that you employ, and whether you involve the students in helping to moderate these. Sometimes you may need to adapt curriculum content to focus on core skill areas in which all or certain children need support. You might also need to enrich the curriculum to provide extra challenges for students with particular gifts and talents. Note that these strategies are likely to support the learning of all students, not only those in need of additional learning support.

You do not have to feel alone with the huge task of supporting the learning of your children. Instead, try working with your colleagues, sharing ideas, experiences and concerns, as this will make the challenge seem easier and help you all to work more effectively.

You may have students who need psycho-social support, in which case you could talk to a counsellor and refer the children for assistance. If you have students with special educational needs, you need to know where and how to get support.

Sometimes there is no one right answer, but try being creative, flexible and positive. Any effort to support your students will bring some reward!

## Teacher development outcomes

By the end of this Unit you will have developed your:

- knowledge and understanding of different ways of learning and multisensory approaches to teaching and learning;
- ability to differentiate, enrich, adapt and use a wide range of classroom strategies to identify and support children with diverse learning needs to access the curriculum.

## Learning in many ways

Every learner uses different ways of learning, and it will also depend on what they are learning and the learning context itself, as to which different way they may employ. But most learners have a preference for some approaches over others. Students will need introducing to different ways of learning in order to find out for themselves which ways help them make progress and they enjoy the most. Look at the list below and identify the ways that you, yourself, like to use when learning new things. People learn:

- by doing and experimenting;
- by moving;
- by seeing;
- by writing;
- by drawing;
- by hearing and listening;
- by speaking;
- by reading;
- through shapes and colours;
- through music and rhythm;

- in a group or alone;
- quickly or slowly;
- through details or through the 'big picture'.

In the same way that you have preferred ways of learning, so will your students. Some children learn better by seeing, others by hearing, and others by doing and touching. Most children use all of these ways of learning. Indeed, learning is most effective when as many different senses as possible are used.

Good teachers make sure that their teaching takes these different ways of learning into account. For example, if you are introducing 3D shapes to your students, provide examples of the shapes – such as a box for a cube – for the children to handle so they can explore their properties. The first Case Study in this Unit shows how Maha uses a range of practical activities to help children visualise, and remember how to write, certain symbols in Arabic.

### Case study 39

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Maha teaches Grade 1 in the West Bank.

Maha noticed during Arabic lessons that more than half of the students in her class had difficulties in recognising some similar letters and in using them. She had two students, Saleh and Suhad, who were having particular problems with differentiating between letters. She decided to explore the range of resources available in school to help with teaching Arabic before she began to make her own. She spoke with the Arabic language teacher who showed her some worksheets that were available and some pictures that she could use. She was also interested in the four small trays that were in the cupboard, as she had seen another teacher use these with sand in to help children practise their handwriting. Maha thought that she could use these trays to help her students more. She felt that, rather than just practising the same thing on paper over and over again, the trays would allow children the freedom to make mistakes and wipe them over until they were happy to share what they had done. Writing in sand would also enable them to write the letters slightly larger than on paper, which would help them with their motor skills and to develop a mental map of each letter.

Maha also made a board game in which children had to differentiate the different letters in order to progress along a trail. The board game trail was based on characters from a story she had read to them earlier in the term and which they had all enjoyed. Maha tried the board game out with her class. She found that it kept their interest and proved popular, and so she put it onto the open resources shelf

at the back of the class. She told the children they could use it if they finished their work early or could play with it during break time.



Figure 83: Varied learning resources can help in ensuring students remain engaged.

As the children became more competent with one set of letters, Maha then introduced a new letter. As before, she allowed them to practise until she was confident that they had retained how to write and form the letter. Maha made up a new game to use at the end of the school day, whereby students as they were selected had to pick out a letter from a basket of letters to match the one she was holding up. If they got it right, that child lined up for the dismissal. This game was greatly enjoyed by everyone. Within less than two weeks, many children had made good progress and, in particular, Saleh and Suhad were much more confident with some of the letters. Maha realised however that they would need more practice than the rest of the class and planned to build this into lessons whenever she could with different games and techniques to keep them interested.

### Comment

Maha used many interactive and child-centred methods to engage her students in learning. She was aware which students were not progressing as well as others and, because she knew them well through observation and by keeping a variety of records and samples of students' work, she was able to determine the kind of support they needed. She also was very creative and planned stimulating and interesting activities to help all the students concentrate on the task.





Now look at the first Activity in this Unit, which asks you to develop some resources or learning materials to use with students in one of your classes.

### Activity 46



Learning aids that can be physically touched and explored will make a huge difference to the learning progress of your students. These can include letters or numbers, flash cards, and blocks or bricks with words and pictures on the different faces.

To produce teaching and learning aids, you will need scissors, markers or crayons, glue, cardboard (or any hard paper, for example from empty packets of food). You can also use sand, modelling clay, rope or any other materials easily available in the environment.

Think about what lessons you are planning to teach over the next week or two and then think about the kinds of teaching aids or resources that would help the students learn and understand the new ideas and develop new skills. For example, if you are investigating shapes in maths, you could tell the children they are going to make sets of the shapes. Involve them in collecting the materials to make them with. They will learn more by making the shapes themselves than if you just provide them with the shapes. Try to make the learning aids strong so that they can be used many times.

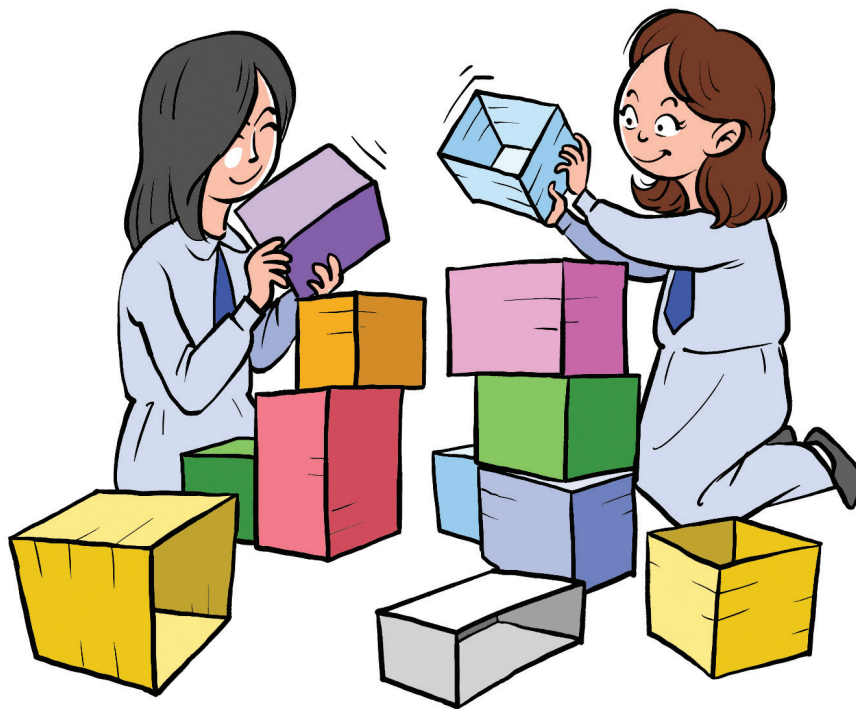


Figure 84: Think about how learning aids can be used to help students understand content.

Think about making different types of teaching and learning aids that utilise the different senses (seeing, hearing, touching, perhaps even smelling and tasting!). You can also use the ideas presented in the previous Units.

Make notes in your Programme Notebook about what you did. If you can, add photos or samples of the teaching aids you produced. Reflect on how involved the students were in making the resources. What do you think they learned from the exercise? How do you know this? Share what you did and what you learned with your colleagues.

## Comment

*Collecting the materials to make resources can be a challenge, but if you encourage your students to bring in, on a regular basis, any empty food boxes and other materials, you will soon build up a range of useful aids for your teaching. Children love to be asked to collect things and then to use them constructively in class. Recycling and reusing materials such as food packaging will help keep the environment cleaner too.*



## Planning learning support

There are many ways you can support the learning of the children. You need to plan how to differentiate, adapt and enrich your teaching methods, the learning content and learning materials to meet the different needs of the children. All students do not need to complete the same tasks in order to learn the same things! Here are some ideas on how to plan and manage your lessons so that all the students are able to succeed better:

- Give students work that they can realistically complete and succeed in. For some students this might mean drawing, for others writing and learning key words, for others reading a text and answering questions on it, and for others explaining orally what they have understood. You will not use all of these in one lesson, but choose them when necessary or appropriate.
- Make sure that your instructions are clear so that all students, in their different groups, can access the tasks planned. This will save you time so that you can help those students who need extra support with the actual task.
- Ensure that all students have time to complete the tasks given. Some students could be given less work than others so that they have time to complete it well.
- Ensure that you mark the work, explaining how students could improve it next time.

- Address any lack of understanding by using other ways to teach the same ideas.
- Sometimes divide students within a lesson into ability groups and give the groups different tasks according to their needs and ways of learning so they can support and help each other.
- Involve some children in independent learning activities (for example hand-writing practice) while assisting other students individually or as a group.
- Plan your timetable so that you combine subjects such as arts and Arabic language – you can then give students an arts activity that they can do independently and take a group of students at a time for reading practice.
- Plan your timetable so that some lessons a week are used for learning new topics while other lessons can be used for practising core skills and for enrichment activities.
- Use peer teaching, so that students who have finished with their work can be assigned to help others. This helps both those that help and those that are helped to deepen their understanding.
- Ask children from an upper Grade to visit your class to help with listening to your students read.
- Co-teach with another teacher and combine the two class groups, so that one teacher can teach the whole group while the other uses the time to support some individual students.
- Give homework that helps students to consolidate what has been done in class.
- Ask a community or family member to volunteer in your class to help the students by, for example, hearing them read or working with a group (following advice from you as to what to do).

### **Individual support**

As a teacher, you need to be creative, especially when a student doesn't understand what is being taught. Teaching the same thing the same way again will not help them learn if they did not understand the first time. When a student doesn't understand, you need to change something about what you said or about the material or content you used. You also need to check if there are any gaps in the student's previous skills and knowledge that require attention first. The lists below show the kinds of individual support you could provide to address some learning difficulties.

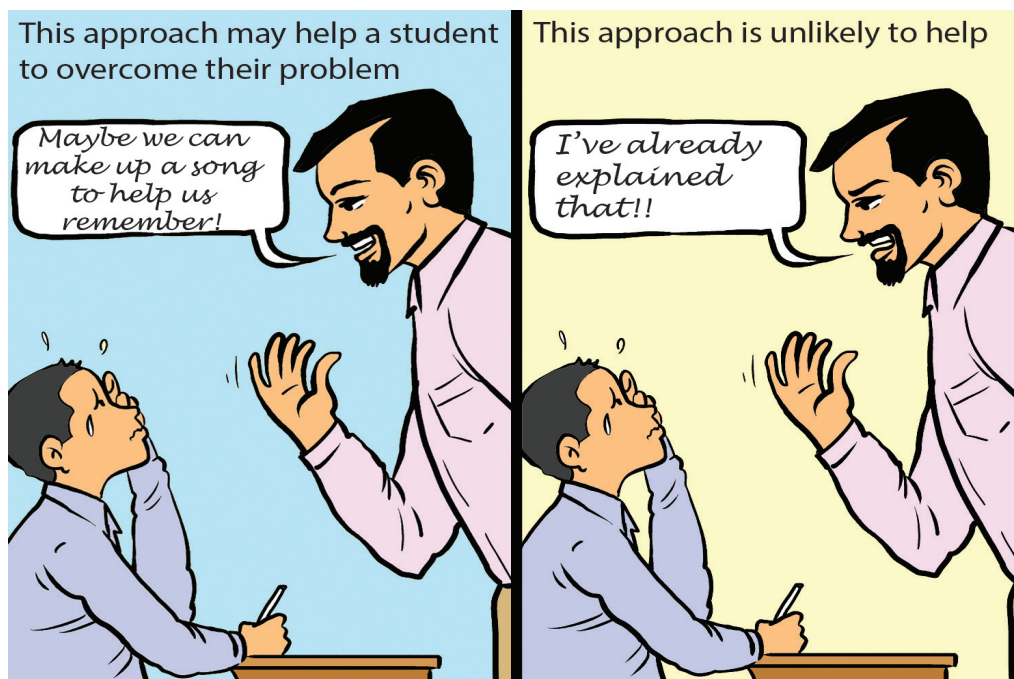


Figure 85: Students learn in different ways and teachers should plan accordingly.

Children with difficulties in learning learn better through:

- practical examples;
- learning by doing;
- using pictures;
- using their senses – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling;
- modelling what others are doing;
- plenty of repetition;
- practising the same skill in many different ways;
- practising the same skill in many different situations (in different lessons, at home etc.);
- breaking a task into small parts;
- positive feedback and encouragement;
- completing tasks that they are able to complete and understand.

You can provide individual learning support in the following ways.

- Include the child in whole-group activities - for example, a shy child could join in a whole-class activity by pointing at a picture rather than answering by speaking out loud.

- Give work that matches children's abilities and needs - for example, providing separate exercises in which you have prepared activities according to the child's needs and learning targets.
- Give additional support at the end of the school day.
- Let the child sit in front so that you can observe them and help out when necessary.
- Have necessary learning aids, such as counters, pictures etc., available and ready to use all the time.
- Give the child work on a sheet rather than writing it on the board. Reading and following tasks from a personal sheet is much easier.
- Assign a peer to help those who are having difficulty.
- Make a few learning aids for activities so that a child can use them to work more independently.
- Ask a family member to come to school to work with you to learn about ways they could help the child.

### **Breaking down tasks**

Perhaps you have noticed that one of your students cannot do a particular task very well. If so, you need to identify the root of the problem and think of ways to help that student. The answer often lies in understanding that most tasks and skills consist of a number of sub-skills and tasks, and that breaking down the task into smaller steps may make the learning more manageable and effective. This idea of 'task analysis' can be applied during a single activity within a lesson, for example when writing a story, and also when learning a skill that takes time to learn, such as reading.

'Process writing' is an example of breaking down the task of writing into small, manageable steps. Just think of what steps or processes need to be done to complete the activity. You can make a note for younger children to follow when writing simple sentences, for example like this below:

- Plan what you want to write. Say it out loud.
- Clap the syllables of the first word. What sounds do you hear? Write.
- Leave space before the next word.
- Then clap the next word and write it.
- Finish writing the whole sentence in the same way.

- Read what you wrote slowly.
- Check for errors:
  - Spelling
  - Space between words
  - Letter shapes
  - Punctuation
- Make corrections.

When you discover that a task is more difficult for some students, think of how to divide the learning into smaller steps. When helping children to learn to read, for example, it is necessary to break this down into a wide range of smaller tasks. The skill of reading a word may seem simple, but it is not. There are many underlying skills that the child needs to master to be able to read. Note that often students may seem to be reading, but they may have just memorised the specific word or words and not mastered all the sub-skills necessary to read fluently. As you know, in order to read fluently, the student needs to:

- be able to recognise the letters in the word;
- know that a word is a unit that has a specific meaning;
- know that a word consists of sounds and syllables;
- know which sounds they represent and be able to differentiate between these sounds;
- know that a word is read from right to left (or in English from left to right);
- be able to join sounds together to form syllables;
- be able to make sense of the sounds and syllables;
- understand the meaning of the words they read.

Many of these skills need to be taught as part of a wider reading programme that introduces all children to the joys of reading and the importance of it to their future lives. Module 4 explored ideas about the teaching of reading that you could use to help those who are having difficulty beginning to read.

As a teacher, it is important to know how to enable your students to develop effective learning strategies. Many children have difficulties in learning because they use ineffective learning strategies. Sometimes this is because no one has paid attention to how they learn, retain information, process information and draw conclusions. It may also be that the teaching strategies of the teacher have

been ineffective. Some children have specific learning difficulties such as a poor short-term memory. Teachers can devise simple strategies, such as games, to help children learn effectively. For example, 'Kim's game' is a good game to train the memory. Here you need to collect a group of common objects from the classroom on a tray and give the students two minutes to look at them. Then cover the tray and ask the students to list the objects, either by telling you or writing them down. This game can be made more difficult by adding more objects or making the time allowed to look and write shorter.

Observing your children as they are working will provide you with insight into how they learn and, with experience, you will be able to see where they need help and where they need to develop more effective ways of working. Asking them to explain what strategies they use to complete an activity or solve a problem and why they use that method is valuable for the child and for you as their teacher. When you know this, you can better match your teaching to their needs.

Some children show that they are not engaging in the learning by displaying inappropriate behaviour. As a teacher, you need to manage the behaviour effectively, but also need to consider how to engage this child in the learning and what the reason for their non-engagement is. You have to think what you need to do to gain their interest and sustained attention in the learning activities. Case Study 40 explores some of these issues.

### Case study 40

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Maisha teaches a Grade 5 class in Jabal Amman, Jordan.

One girl in Maisha's class, Shula, was having difficulty learning and as a consequence she sat quietly in the corner and never spoke or mixed with other children. Quite often she was absent from school altogether. When she was in school, Shula would often have her book open and would copy from other children if anyone sat near her. If there was no one she could copy from she would try to do the work for a short time, but then she would just sit and look around at everyone. She caused no problems in the class and most teachers just thought she was not very intelligent, but no trouble. As a consequence, no one had interacted much with her until she moved into Maisha's Grade 5 class.

Maisha was a new teacher in the school and was surprised at how behind Shula was. As she talked to her colleagues about Shula, she was saddened by how negative or non-committal most of her previous teachers were. Maisha was motivated to find out more about what Shula could do and from there try to plan to enable her to participate more in school and to raise her level of achievement and engagement.



Figure 86: Students who are behind may need specific strategies to help them.

Maisha did research on the Internet to find possible strategies she could use and also spoke to her Head Teacher. She spent nearly two weeks watching Shula and talking to her about her work and about what she did not understand. She also carried out some simple reading and mathematical tests to assess Shula's literacy and numeracy level and skills. At the end of two weeks she analysed what she had recorded about Shula and shared this with the Student Support Team that was newly formed in the school.

The leader of this team then worked with Maisha to plan a series of activities to help Shula gain confidence with her reading first of all. Maisha organised her class so that she had time each day to spend with Shula on a one-to-one basis, and also the Student Support teacher came in and did some word-building work with her.

Maisha tried to ensure the work she planned was interesting and involved the students having to work in pairs or small groups to play word games and write short rhymes. Maisha also broke the work down into easily manageable steps for Shula and another student, Ulima, whom she found was having similar problems. Shula seemed to enjoy working with Ulima and both gradually became more confident and their self-esteem rose as they made progress together. Maisha learnt a lot from the Student Support Team about strategies to help these two students interact more with the rest of the class. Previously the class had teased the girls about their not being able to keep up in class and this had led to their withdrawal.



Maisha used a circle time to talk with the class about how to value each other, and explained that her job as a teacher was to help them all. This was quite a difficult task for Maisha, but the class responded well and began to treat Shula and Ulima with more respect.



Figure 87: Grouping students with similar learning needs can sometimes help you to specialise the learning content and build their confidence.

### Comment



Students who are struggling at school can react in different ways. Some, like Shula, withdraw and feel very bad about themselves. They may feel they do not belong and this can be exacerbated by teasing and bullying from other students and by harsh criticism from teachers. Maisha took on the task of helping Shula and then Ulima and had to work hard, trying out many different ways of helping them learn and feel happy in class. The results may have been slow, but Maisha was rewarded by seeing how the girls' self-esteem rose and how they made progress in their reading.

The next Activity links with Maisha's efforts, as it asks you to identify what kind of individual support you could give to a specific student in a class you teach.

### Activity 47



You will recall that in Unit 19 you developed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for a child. Try this again, but this time focus on one skill or subject. Think of a child who has difficulties learning a specific skill (for example reading or, even more specifically, breaking down a new word into manageable bits), or the subject you teach. Use the headings listed below to guide you to identify the key learning you want to support.

<p><i>Student name, class, grade, age (subject):</i></p>	<p><i>List the strengths of the student here. What is the student good at? What can the student do?</i></p>	
<p><i>List the warning signs, difficulties and barriers to this student's learning here:</i></p>	<p><i>List the learning needs of the student here. Underline the three most important needs, as meeting them will be your target.</i></p>	<p><i>List possible changes or strategies in your teaching methods, classroom environment and materials to support the student:</i></p>
<p><i>List possible sources for support and referral here</i></p>		

Ask colleagues and members of your Student Support Team for help and ideas on the kind of activities that would support the student you have identified. Make a note of any resources you need, and how you will acquire or make these to help the child's learning.

Set out a timescale for the plan and, once you are ready, start working with the child. As you work, keep notes in your Programme Notebook and also put notes on the child's file as evidence of their progress.

## Comment

*The work you have undertaken through this Activity marks the start of a journey for the student you have identified, and this needs to continue throughout their school life. As you work with this student and others, you will develop your repertoire of skills, techniques and strategies that can be modified and adapted to different situations, contexts and students' needs. Many of these can also be used in whole-class teaching too, because the important point about teaching and learning for all students is that they need to be motivated and stimulated to want to learn. It is just more difficult for some students to become involved because of barriers they face.*





## Summary

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As you have discovered throughout your study of this programme, using a range of interactive strategies can make your teaching more relevant, stimulating and interesting, as well as more responsive to the needs of all the students in your class. Using pair and group work, role play, drama, stimulating and eye-catching resources, games, displays and books will help all students to learn and can also help individuals who need extra support. It is how you differentiate within these various activities that will support individual students.

Being able to adapt and apply different learning strategies is a professional skill. Knowing how to modify a task to meet the needs of students with different abilities in your class will become easier with practice. But by trying to work in this way you will see what works for you and your students and what you need to explore more in your teaching. Do not be afraid to try things out and to watch the impact on students' achievement! Your task as a teacher is to work towards providing an inclusive school that supports all students, regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, learning, socioeconomic status, health or psycho-social needs. We hope this Module has helped you do that.

