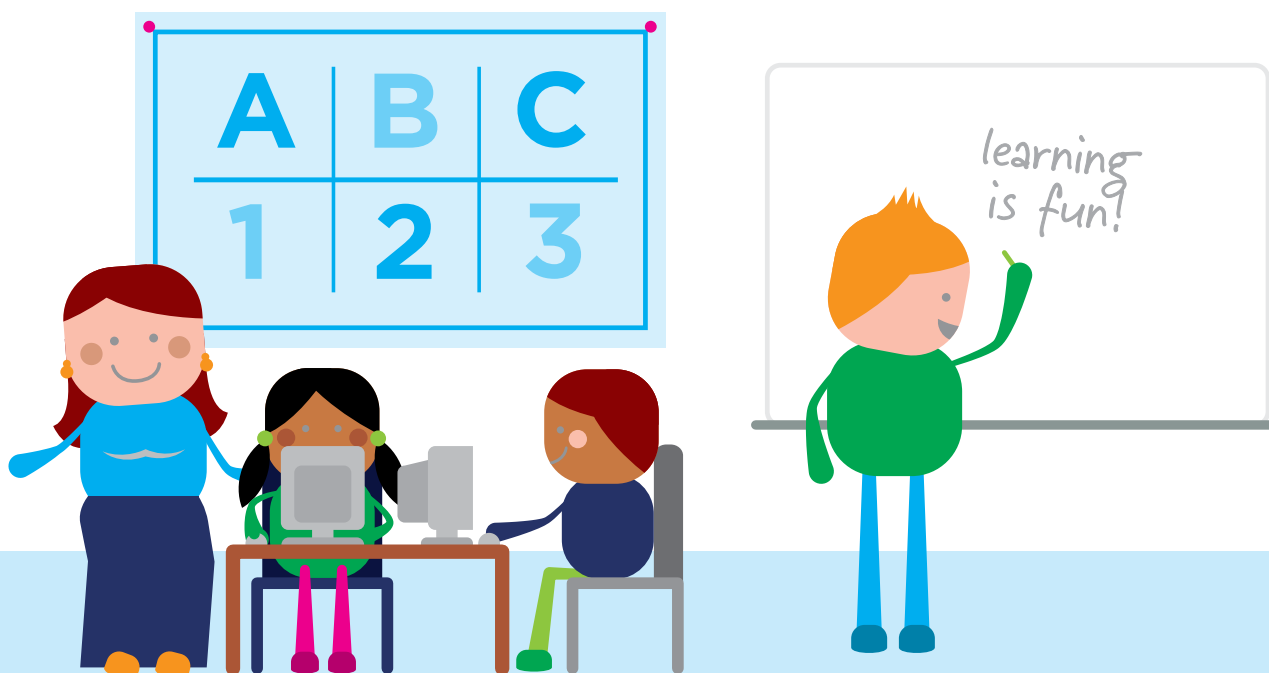




CASE STUDIES FROM SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TRAINING-OF-TRAINERS PROGRAMME (2012–2014)



The opinions expressed in the case studies are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of UNICEF





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Introduction

In 2011, UNICEF Skopje hired consultants from the Enabling Education Network to develop five training modules, the topics of which had been determined through previous baseline research in the country. The topics were:

1. Inclusive Education Theory and Concepts
2. School Inclusion Teams
3. Reaching Out-of-School Children
4. Screening and Identification of Learning Needs
5. Individual Education Plans

In order to ensure that the modules better reflected the reality and needs of teachers and teacher trainers, a participatory and consultation-based training-of-trainers process was developed. Personnel from the Bureau for Education Development, professors from the pedagogical faculties in Bitola and Stip, defectologists, and teachers from primary schools and kindergartens participated.

During the workshops, participants not only became familiar with the draft training modules, but also had a chance to practise using and adapting the training tools and activities, and to offer feedback for improvements. The training-of-trainers workshops were therefore lively and hands-on, and the participants developed innovative adaptations to the core training activities. Revisions to the modules were made which captured participants' ideas and experiences of trying to use the activities.

Four of the modules were discussed, tested and revised in this way.¹ It was then decided that, rather than a further training-of-trainers workshop, what the teachers and trainers needed was an opportunity to reflect on what they had done so far, and share their experiences.

A fifth workshop, held in February 2014, therefore focused on reflecting on the training modules and presenting case studies of how schools have moved forward with developing inclusive education in the last few years.² This short booklet offers some of the case studies that the teachers/trainers developed. Some of the examples focus on telling a whole-school story, while others focus on individual children who have been supported to attend and participate in learning. All of the case studies offer ideas and inspiration to other practitioners – within and beyond the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – who are working hard to make education more inclusive for all children.

The case studies were written by the school personnel themselves (not by the external consultants) and have been presented here following translation and some editing.



¹ Reports of all four workshops, detailing the process and results, are available from UNICEF Skopje.

² A report of this workshop is available from UNICEF Skopje.

Creating a (more)
inclusive school
- "Gjorgija Pulevski"
primary school



1. Creating a (more) inclusive school

Elizabeta Petrovik (teacher)
– “Gjorgija Pulevski” primary school

This case study describes the inclusive processes at the George Pulevski Primary School in Skopje, which was inspired by the inclusive education project supported and implemented by UNICEF.

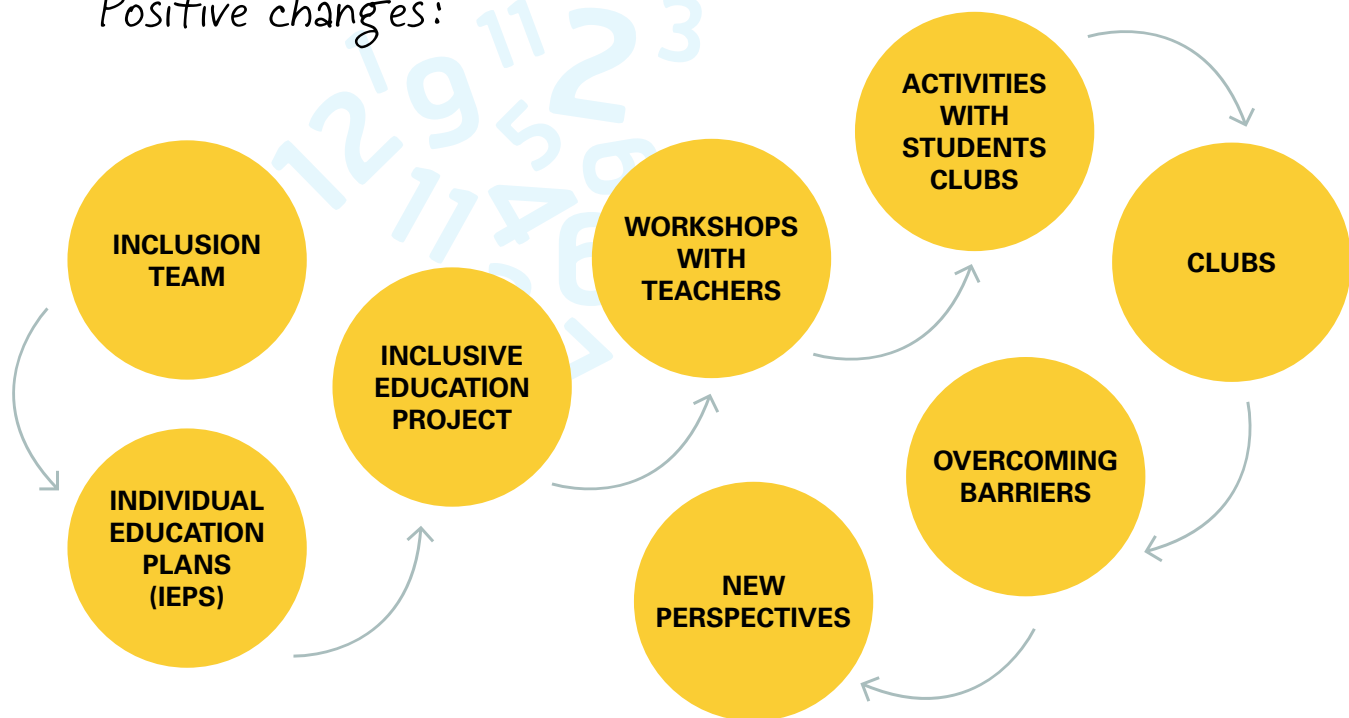
During the current academic year (2013/14) the school has 957 students, of whom 23 have been identified as having special educational needs. The school has 63 teachers; together with the psychologist and pedagogue they are moving our school from an integration approach towards inclusive education.

Our resources are not lacking, as the following diagram shows:

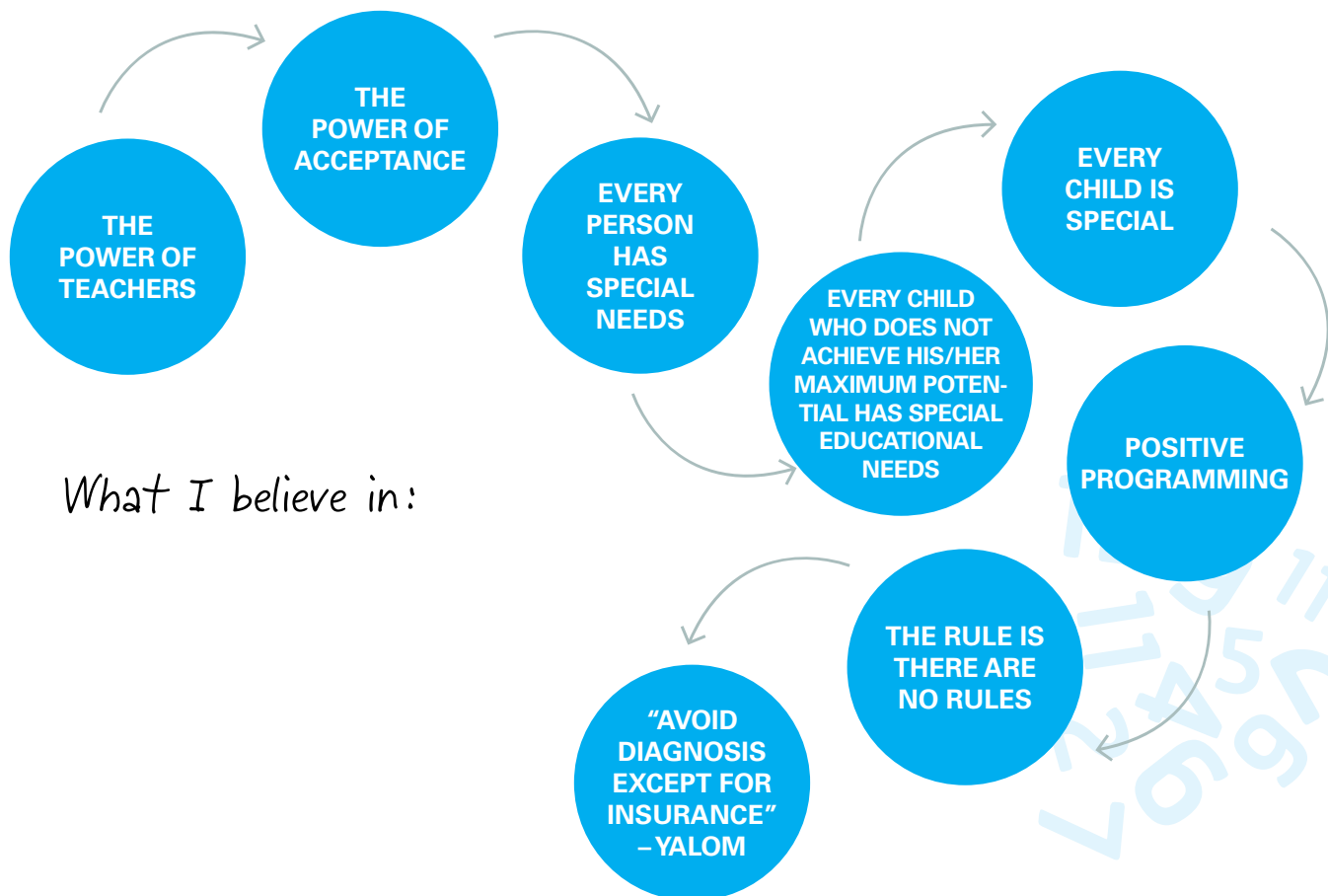


Some of the positive inclusive processes now happening in our school were directly stimulated by the UNICEF training-of-trainers workshops.

Positive changes:



The data for this case study is based on activities led by the school inclusion team.



What I believe in:

Starting with a personal commitment

Nothing is accidental. The theory and concepts of inclusive education are close to my heart, both personally and professionally. In an initial study I was surprised to see how I managed to acquire more specific insights into the special needs of one student with diabetes. However, I think it is easy to be an inclusive teacher in my class. The real challenge began when I came out of my safe zone, the classroom.

Building a movement

At the beginning, my interventions in the school were 'doing without anybody knowing'. I shared information and recruited like-minded people. I knew that teachers felt overburdened with essential (and unnecessary) work, and would not be very willing to 'waste time'. The support I received from the school support services (pedagogue and psychologist) and the director at that time was very important to me.

Slowly I changed my approach into a more direct one. Later, the first school document related to inclusion was developed. This was an action plan for working with children with special needs, and it led to the establishment of a school inclusion team.

The training I received during the second module of UNICEF's inclusive education programme, plus the case study from the Dimo Hadzi Dimov primary school, which was presented during the training, provided the knowledge base for the establishment of our school inclusion team.

We subsequently started an 'inclusive school project'. This was about developing a formula so that students, teachers and parents could jointly build a (more) inclusive school and be involved in a continuous process of inclusion, following the principles of the social model. We managed to do this spontaneously and without pressure, so our colleagues did not consider it to be an imposed activity.

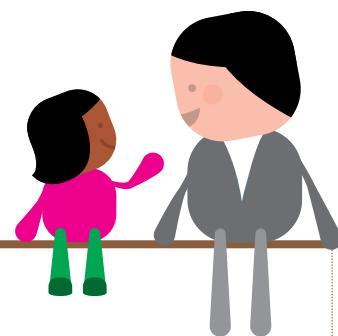
Gradually, every pupil with special educational needs received his/her own individual education plan (IEP).

I ran a workshop jointly with the school psychologist. The psychologist worked on a case study with the teachers. I worked with a group of students and parents on understanding the social model and developing a creative story about a lonely, rejected boy. Eventually the two groups merged and shared and discussed their presentations.

We also organised free family counselling in our school, for families in need, to help them cope with current problems and get support in the ecosystem (three of our school employees are also family counsellors).

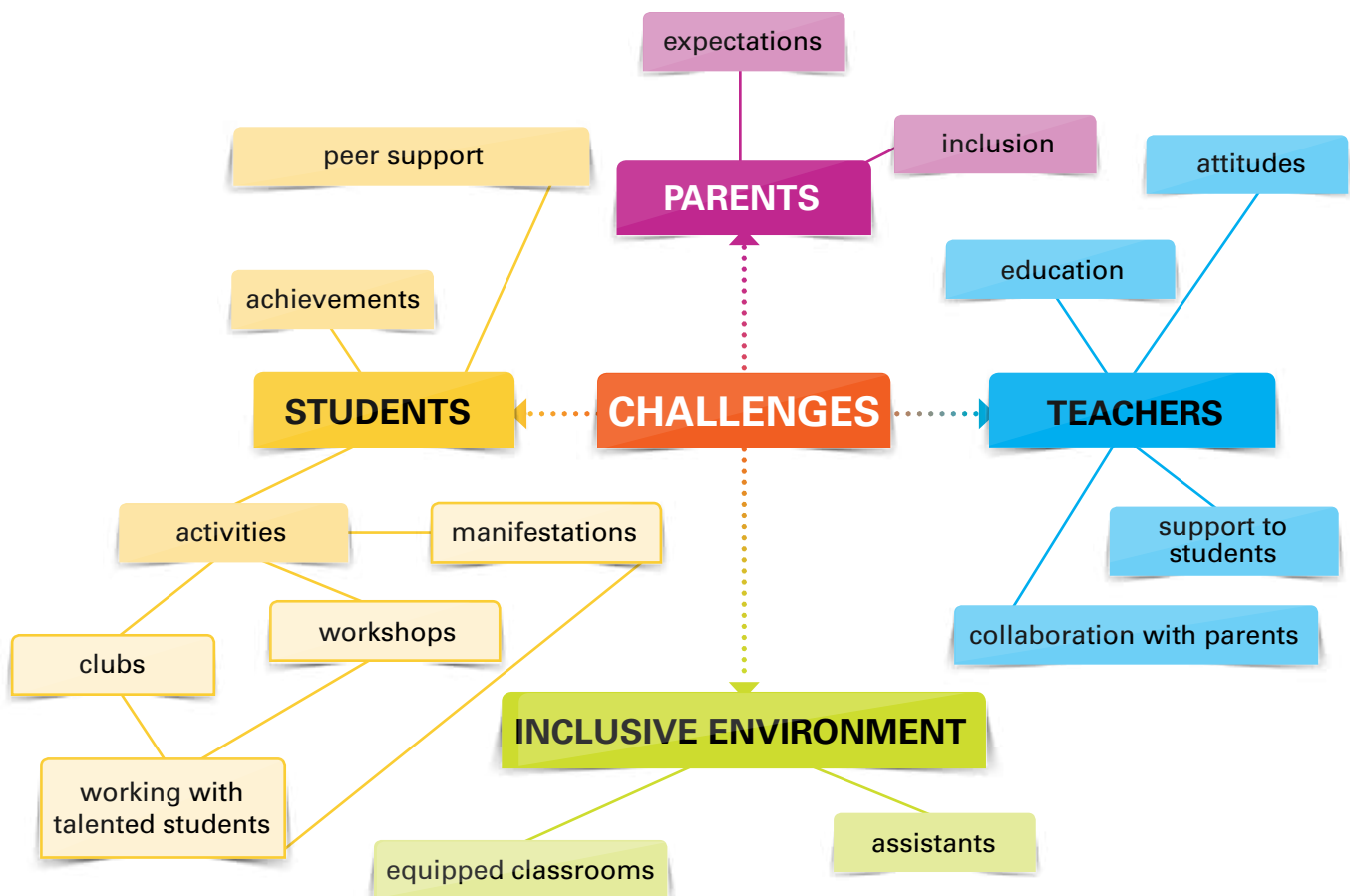
I can see clearly now that each module in the UNICEF training provided a different perspective on everyday challenges for the inclusive teacher, team and school.



**Table 1:** summary of our 'inclusive school project'

Purpose	Detecting the special educational needs of students with: ▶ disabilities (physical, mental, sensory) ▶ behavioural problems ▶ emotional or health problems ▶ family problems due to serious situations (illness, loss, unemployment, relocation, divorce, etc.), or dysfunctional family ▶ gifted children. By continuously encouraging the students' presence, participation and achievement of learning outcomes in the regular and extracurricular activities, our school will have a constant, dynamic, inclusive process to help us accept and meet the learning needs of all our students.
Expected results	▶ All students are valued, participate and achieve results. ▶ Teachers are educated, have a flexible approach and embrace diversity (disability, behaviour, talent, etc.). ▶ Students learn to accept diversity and variety (gender, disability, behaviour, talent, religion, ethnicity, social status, etc.). ▶ Parents/guardians are informed, consulted, participate in school activities and get educated. ▶ Continuous inclusive process across the whole school, through connecting and networking activities based on the principle: 'you can teach and you can learn'.
Activities	▶ Workshops with teachers, students and parents ▶ Clubs for talented students ▶ Counselling for parents ▶ Counselling for students ▶ Collaboration among employees ▶ Collaboration with parents ▶ Preparation and participation of students in school events ▶ Visits to families, and if needed, other activities.

Challenges we are facing and trying to tackle



Stakeholder relationships

The challenges we face are primarily related to the functioning of teacher-student-parent *relationships*.

Teachers need continuing education (training, access to literature, workshops, instruments). This helps them overcome negative, individual/medical-model-based perceptions and attitudes. Thus, they need to acquire skills for supporting students and establishing collaboration with parents. In this regard, training content related to human rights, the social model of inclusion,

defining inclusive education, the twin-track approach (which I would call systemic approach), learning styles and individualised planning really help. The school inclusion team uses this training content adapted to our context.

One thing that we can't be proud of at the moment is that we are simply avoiding some teachers and don't even try to involve them in our inclusive education story. These are teachers who openly show that they cannot work with children identified as having special educational needs.

On the other hand, I have been pleasantly surprised by a group of teachers from the upper grades who constantly co-operate to allow individual students with special educational needs to improve their learning achievements.

“Most of our teachers understand the process of inclusion but some still believe the child is the problem and that extra activities need to come from the defectologists, parents or special schools. We need more training here.”³

From the training we have received via UNICEF, it is clear that parents should be informed about the ICF approach (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) and that they should participate in the preparation of IEPs. We try to involve parents. They co-operate with the psychological and pedagogical services in the school, with the mobile defectologist and the teacher. But we know that co-operation can be expanded further, because it is essential for the presence, real participation and achievement of their children in the educational process.

I also cannot ignore the problems that arise when parents' expectations from teachers are too high (this mostly occurs when parents want teachers to achieve things that the parents have not done with the child at home). It is understandable that parents expect full commitment from the teacher, but equally there are expectations for parents as well.

Challenges are especially evident in classes with 30-34 students and those with day care. Sometimes parents of students with emotional problems (children who are harming themselves or very aggressive and endangering themselves and others) have strong reactions. This is probably our biggest challenge, and we are trying to engage personal assistants and a full-time defectologist to help us address such issues. The school inclusion team has tried for two years in a row to get these extra personnel. Maybe next school year, together with the parents, we will be able to succeed.

³ Quotations in this case study are from the presentation given during the experience sharing workshop in February 2014.

Competing priorities

We have clubs for talented children, workshops for children with special needs, and support groups (which are associated with inclusive, literary or artistic content, using an approach like art therapy), and students are regularly involved in all school events. However, during this school year such activities have not been as rich as in the past two years. Teachers increasingly waste their energy filling out written documents for the inspection services. They are literally racing against time to fit everything in, and sadly they struggle to prioritise extra activities and clubs.

“One way we support inclusion is about using our free time to support our colleagues in their teaching, especially when there are children with special educational needs.”

Supporting all students

We have an increasing number of successful examples of inclusion of individual children that are worthy of being case studies. For instance, the school psychologist is developing a programme of work for an autistic student, using ICT. The student currently spends most of their time in the psychologist's office, rather than in the classroom, so if the new approach is successful at supporting the student to engage more in classroom-based learning, it will be worth recording as a case study.

However, I believe that every student who at some time is not reaching his/her own maximum potential can be considered a student 'with special educational needs'. This point of view is often seen and discussed at our school. We are aware that the number of students with 'special educational needs' is actually much higher than 23. There are more and more children who manifest behavioural problems and poor school performance due to family issues (illness, divorce, loss, unemployment, dysfunction, etc).

Teachers are on the front line. They note disturbances during the classes, irregular completion of homework, loss of interest, indiscipline and decrease in school achievements. Teachers notice when relationships with classmates change, when students withdraw

into themselves or become aggressive. They know that some children are often absent from class because of health problems. Sometimes the school even becomes the location for angry spouses to exchange mutually hostile feelings, or for fights with others (e.g. teacher, parent, director, etc), which further worsens the situation for their children.

The school inclusion team is therefore planning activities aimed at identifying students from families experiencing divorce, in order to give adequate support. We think the number of divorce-affected children in our urban environment is growing. (Studies in the last 40-50 years unfortunately show that in the 'destroyed homes', divorce has major consequences for the mental health of children comparable to a death of a parent.)

Equipment

While we could be praised for having removed many architectural and psychosocial barriers to inclusion, and supported the application of assistive technology, there are still many other things that would guarantee more positive changes for students. Properly equipped classrooms, to us, are indeed very important. For instance, we just managed to secure a desk for a student with cerebral palsy. Once we have fitted a lock to a ground-floor classroom, it will be equipped with computers and the girl will be able to attend IT lessons (currently held on the first floor).

Reflecting on our challenges

Participation in UNICEF Skopje's inclusive education project encouraged me to re-think our school challenges. My participation in the last training module was a new stimulus for focusing on the current inclusive processes and the school's future potential. I wanted to share the latest impressions from the training with colleagues and explain to them how much we do for our students with special educational needs, and how powerful we are as teachers.

"I believe in the power of the teachers, but sometimes they don't understand their true powers and potential and how many lives have been positively affected by the support of a teacher."

When I did this, some of the teachers reacted surprisingly negatively, even anxiously. Perhaps I would have felt less frustrated if I had used my old approach: 'operate without them knowing you operate'! However, although it took a lot of energy to come to a common conclusion, my colleagues did discuss important challenges, which I believe apply to other schools as well. I have summarised these in Table 2, showing possible solutions that we are already working on, but also ideas we will start working on.

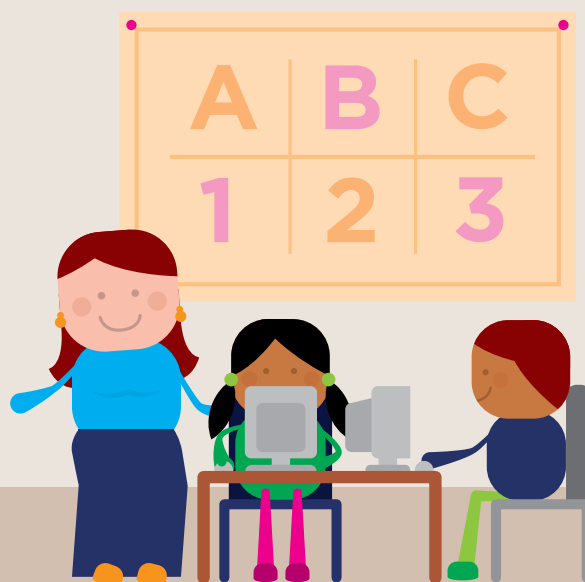


Table 2: analysing challenges and solutions

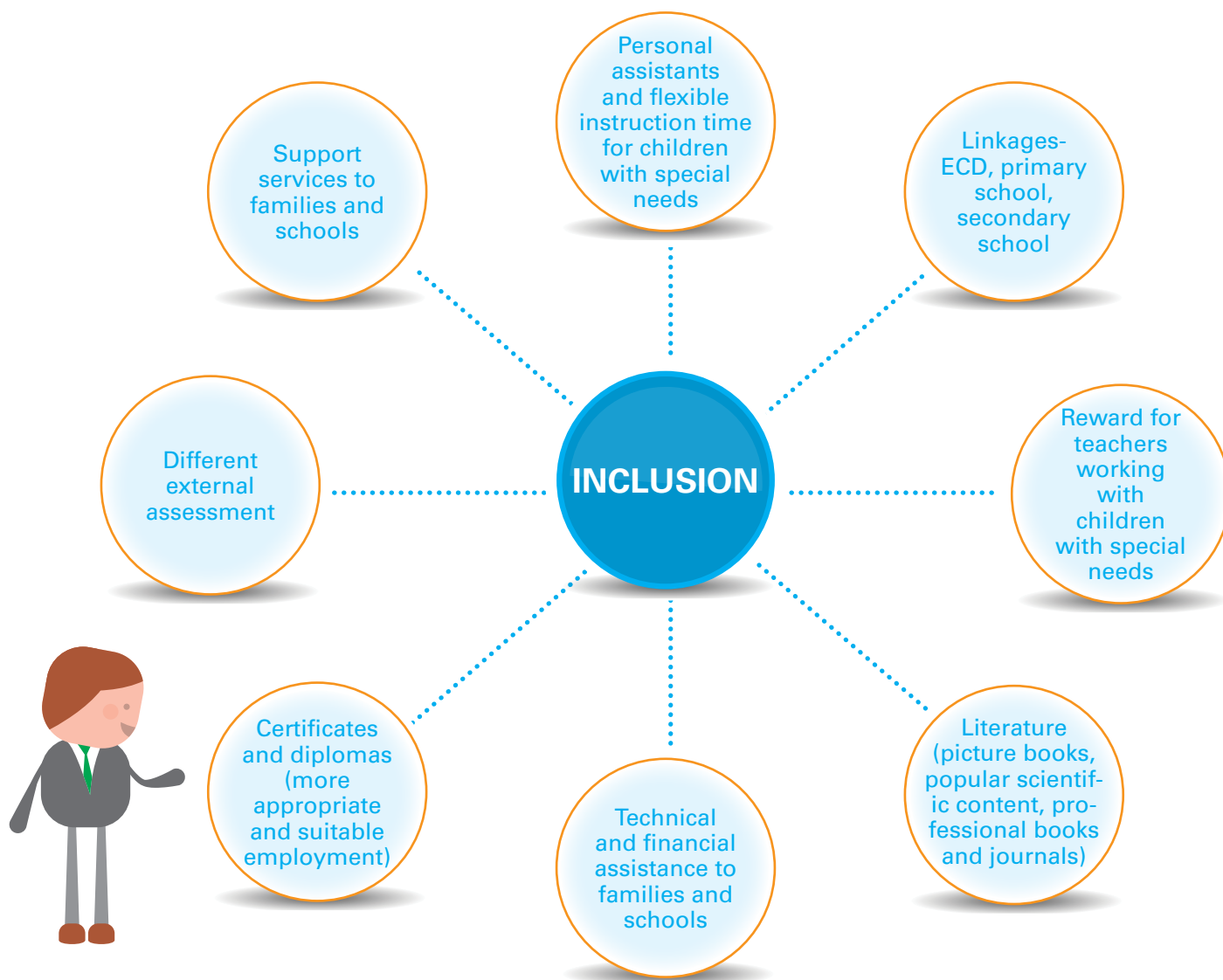
Challenges	Possible solutions
▶ Students with special needs that are undetected when enrolling in first grade (for example, students with emotional problems), with the possibility of unequal distribution of children with special needs between classes	▶ Compulsory attendance of teacher at the enrolment process, with the goal of identifying students with special needs
▶ Teachers who refuse to work with students with special needs	▶ Teacher can be asked to write a statement of explanation
▶ Colleagues who think that the process of inclusion in school is not appropriate, or could be improved	▶ Involve them in the work of the school inclusion team and try to implement their suggestions and activities (if they have any)
▶ Lack of parental involvement	▶ Mandatory inclusion of parents in development of IEP ▶ Attendance at workshops designed by the inclusion team and meetings with the school counsellor
▶ Unco-operative and unrealistic parents	▶ Code of conduct for teachers/parents
▶ Students with behaviour that endangers their own or classmates' safety	▶ Request a personal assistant and a special education teacher (and involvement of the Parents Board)
▶ Children with ADHD	▶ Occasional activities with psychologist or pedagogue ▶ Occasional activities in other classes, in order to change the context, and allow the teacher to focus on other children while the child is absent ▶ Workshops

My reflections on real inclusion in schools

True inclusion cannot happen without a systematic approach. Even if there is an ideal that the school will be 'friendly' for a child with special educational needs, interventions from the system, networking and links are still needed. One single mother of an adopted child with special needs in our school said: "The state has given me this child. It should help me take care of

him. I need financial assistance to be able to pay the person who will pick him up from school and take care of him at home until I am back from work."

Working towards an inclusive society means removing barriers and investing in a better systemic approach. In future I would like to see the following changes take place:



I believe in inclusive education as the single special route that leads to an inclusive society. All children (people) sometimes need special attention and support, so that they can more easily overcome daily challenges, or perhaps weather specific storms they are facing.

Every child is special; talented and intended for success in something. If children (people) are helped to experience success in doing something, many opportunities are opened to them, enabling them to experience a successful life story.

I know that the inclusive model is not accepted by some people, and it even scares them. Sometimes when I speak about inclusion I feel

like an intruder standing in front of someone's door. If somebody's heart is a door locked against love... against acceptance... why should I be ashamed? "What you can't do with one person, you can always do it with someone else!" (I. Kolarov)

Writing this study gave me a very important personal insight – I constantly link inclusion with systemic family therapy.

Inclusion is a dynamic process that is constantly going on in every (more) inclusive school. Sometimes we feel that we are on the top, because we have overcome some important obstacle, but we know that our challenges remain. The inclusive story continues. The world is a big place with lots of opportunities!

Supporting presence,
participation and
achievement: the
importance of co-operation
– "Dimo Hadzi Dimov"
primary school



2. Supporting presence, participation and achievement: the importance of co-operation

**Milka Ivanovska (pedagogue),
Violeta Gjorgjieva (psychologist),
Katica Dukovska Muratovska (teacher),
Nevena Petkovska (teacher),
Aneta Gjorgjievska (teacher)
– “Dimo Hadzi Dimov” primary school**

“We believe that all children can learn; we will always promote an atmosphere that motivates learning.” (School motto)

Introduction

At Dimo Hadzi Dimov school, our rich experiences and our commitment to inclusive education are characterised by diverse challenges and successes. Many students have found their place in society, thanks to our commitment to inclusive education. We believe in inclusive methodology and we are sharing this spirit with our younger colleagues, to ‘open the way’ for current and future generations. This case study is dedicated to all of our students.

In this case study we will show how we implement inclusive practices for all students with special educational needs. We will illustrate good practices for creating conditions that enable pupils with disabilities to enrol and successfully progress through our school. We hope that this case study, featuring a child we will refer to as MM, will help other teachers in overcoming similar challenges.

Meeting a parent

In September 2011 we held a workshop to mark the establishment of our Parent Resource Centre for parents of children with disabilities. The workshop participants included UNICEF staff, parents, and our school’s inclusion team,⁴ among others. The inclusion team presented its work and explained the process of developing inclusive education practices. Parents listened intently to the presentation. During coffee break one parent told us about his son – the full story from his birth to now (age 6):

The boy had developed well during his first year, but problems appeared (at the age of 13 months). The parents noticed an attention deficit and the boy avoided direct eye contact. He did not respond to his name, and his early speech was lost. The parents sought professional help and spent a long period visiting many institutions before a diagnosis was determined.

After telling the story, with a sparkle in his eyes, the father said, “I’ve found a school for my child”

⁴You can read more about the development of our school inclusion team in “Enabling Education Review” Issue 1, 2012, published by EENET: www.eenet.org.uk/resources/eenet_newsletter/eer1/index.php

Meeting others who know the child

In May 2012 we met again with MM's parents, to discuss his enrolment into Grade 1. We made a plan to prepare him for the new school environment. MM visited the school informally on several occasions, with his parents, so that he could become familiar with the inclusion team and the overall school environment. But when MM came to school in June, our inclusion team members noticed that he was visibly upset, his eyes looked frightened and he was wavering with constant head movements. So we stopped him coming again so as not to cause further distress.

We discussed with MM's father, who suggested meeting somewhere else. Thus the school inclusion team, MM's allocated teacher and his parents visited Children's World East – Special Education; a practice institution that MM was attending twice a week for individual work. We

also visited Educational Bureau – Logopedika, where MM received speech therapy three times a week.

MM was already familiar with these places and was close to another child there. He was used to answering questions through games; and we realised that he could count to/from 10, knew relations, colours, shapes and letters. So we had discussions with his educator and speech therapist, and found out more about MM's abilities, needs and potential. We were happy!

In September 2012 MM came, with his parents, to his first class. The new environment and greater mobility in the classroom still upset him, but his teachers – whom he now recognised – helped and encouraged him to play with other children.



Supporting children in class

MM spends time with various children from his class, but mostly with the child sitting next to him. He performs tasks carefully. With a little assistance from his teacher, MM is successfully working through the tasks planned in his IEP, like communicating (often non-verbally) and interacting with strangers, and making eye contact. His attention is improving and this reflects his overall cognitive development. MM socialises with his classmates outside class, attending birthdays, playing in the playroom and at organised home meetings, and he always does his homework – with some help from his parents.

MM has his own routine, which he uses inside and outside the classroom. For instance, he needs to take a certain path through the school otherwise he gets upset, so we support this to happen. He also eats gluten-free and casein-free

food brought from home, rather than eating school-prepared food. This careful diet has been found to improve his condition.

Everything we do with him is tailored to his needs and the context. We take a differentiated approach to working with him and he is making good progress. MM's parents feel that he is completely accepted by the teachers. In class he does what the teacher asks, wants to make friends and socialise, and shows emotions and empathy with his friends. His friends' parents also accept him.

The joint planning and co-operation between the school, MM's parents and staff at the professional institutions outside the school, made positive changes and helped MM to make great progress. The parents are happy. The school team is happy.

Here is a SWOT analysis of MM's current situation:

Strengths ▶ socialisation and communication ▶ confidence ▶ wants to learn English ▶ loves physical education classes	Weaknesses ▶ speech ▶ difficulty with reading ▶ short-term memory ▶ violation of rules set
Opportunities ▶ communicating with other students and teachers ▶ independent; stays in school (without parents) ▶ application of ICT ▶ physical and mental development	Threats ▶ acceptance in the wider environment ▶ difficulties with some education ▶ isolation ▶ rejection of group

The school inclusion team

Supporting
presence,
participation
and achievement:
the importance
of creative
interventions
- "Dane Krapcev"
primary school



3. Supporting presence, participation and achievement: the importance of creative interventions

Rozalija Davkovska (defectologist) and Tanja Metikosh (teacher)
– “Dane Krapcev” primary school



Introduction

People with a hearing impairment often experience difficulty with formulating sentences and have small vocabulary, leading to difficulties in communication. In the country, the identification of hearing impairment in children, and initial rehabilitation activities, are done by special facilities and services prior to referring children to primary education. However, despite the rehabilitative support received by these children, it is challenging for teachers (and other persons directly or indirectly involved in the education system) to work with them in a regular class on a daily basis. This case study therefore focuses on the flexible and creative approach used in our regular primary school to work with a student with moderate hearing loss.

The findings on which this study is based were collected by interviewing the class teacher and associates, as well as analysis of documents. The purpose of this case study is to show the process of including a hearing impaired student in our school.

The student

The student we are focusing on is AX, an 11-year-old studying at Dane Krapcev Primary School. She has a moderate hearing impairment. During the enrolment process, the school inclusion team noticed that AX was having difficulties speaking. They suggested that her parents take her to the Institute for Hearing and Speech. Hearing loss was diagnosed, which was causing AX's speech difficulties.

Identifying abilities and needs

At the beginning, when AX started school, her needs were assessed through observations and an individualised approach. She immediately showed signs of difficulty with following instructions, and participated only in activities that interested her, like drawing and playing games. AX is especially talented at drawing. Her speech was limited to repeating words. So from the outset, we focused on socialisation: improving AX's communication with the teacher and fellow students and her engagement in class activities.

AX started to communicate better with the other students and the teacher, by using short sentences and acting out her ideas. She had particular difficulty when looking at something, remembering and later recognising and naming it (for example, letters, figures, names of children). She also had a limited vocabulary and was unable to use conjunctions, even in short sentences. On the other hand, AX was exceptionally skilled with arranging puzzles and demonstrated creativity in drawing.

A further challenge that was identified was that AX's parents did not co-operate fully. They had embraced the problem but were not always involved in the activities. Added to that, the family spoke a different language at home, to the language used in school, as they are Bosnian.

Addressing the student's needs

The first step was the identification and assessment of AX's individual needs and abilities. This also included assessment of her learning style, the areas where she was most successful, and the areas where she needed more support to be able to participate in learning and complete her tasks.

An IEP was developed which specified learning goals for AX that matched her abilities and identified needs. At the beginning emphasis was put on literacy, but also differentiated goals were developed for all subjects. Also, goals were planned to overcome difficulties and fill in gaps, such as: enriching the vocabulary, learning to listen and communicate with friends, to speak in short sentences, to acquire new concepts and learn their meaning. For successful functioning every day in class it was most important for AX to have her own tasks and activities and to be able to demonstrate her achievements and completed tasks to the others.

Achieving all of this required a multidisciplinary approach by a team of experts that is part of the school inclusion team. They aim to provide advice and support throughout the educational process, to achieve inclusion of the student and the development of her fullest potential, as well as facilitate the acceptance of the student by her peers.

The following instructional methods/strategies have been used with AX:

- ▶ individualised approach
- ▶ working in pairs and small groups
- ▶ play, observation, showing images, applications, objects, toys, illustrative method, dialogue, practical work
- ▶ development of individual instructional booklets for educational purposes
- ▶ use of teaching aids, educational software, materials from the internet.

During art lessons, AX shows a high level of initiative and perseverance in her work. She has a striking ability to notice and remember details and general structures. She is extremely imaginative and creative and her drawing is very accurate. She usually works with a pencil and uses various types of lines and textures. AX can display space, depth three-dimensionality, movement figures, proportion, many details, and feelings (see samples of her artwork below).

Since AX's thoughts and feelings are best expressed through drawings and illustrations, this ability and learning style is almost always used in the process of adopting knowledge and skills in other subjects. Last year, in collaboration with the art teacher, a special programme (for gifted students) was prepared for AX.

Results

AX is now in sixth grade and achieves the goals according to her abilities. A long-term (annual) and mid-term (topical) IEP is being developed for her, for all the subjects where she cannot achieve the goals from the national curriculum for the respective grade. Monitoring of the implementation of the IEPs shows that she is mostly achieving her goals, although if her parents were more fully engaged in the process, the results could be even better.

The special art programme for gifted student that was prepared for AX means she attends some additional classes, and has entered school and out-of-school competitions. Her artwork has been exhibited in the classroom and around the school premises, and she has participated in making visual teaching aids, illustrations and posters for teachers to use.

Observation of individual and group discussions between AX and her classmates show that she is well accepted by everyone and socialises well. As well as having a good achievement level according to her abilities and the educational goals set out in her IEP, AX is included in all activities of the school community (school performances, exhibitions, after-school activities, etc.).

The positive outcomes presented in this case study are primarily a result of the individualised approach, the high level of commitment demonstrated by her teacher, and the process of monitoring and reviewing progress by the school support services.

In achieving goals, emphasis is placed on strengths and on exploiting the student's potential/ talent to help them achieve objectives.

The Action Plan of the school inclusion team means activities are regularly being conducted for students like AX. This includes organising meetings to exchange views and experiences among teachers who teach these students, providing individual support, understanding students' socio-emotional status and taking action for improvement, etc.

Recommendations

The inclusive approach in education starts from the view that necessary changes in schools should be made so that every child – regardless of their ability – can develop at their own pace. The foundation for this is the right of every child to be involved in all spheres of society, including school. All children learn in different ways, regardless of whether the child is considered to have special needs or not. If we follow these principles, then the process of including all children in regular schools will not be a great difficulty. This case study is a positive example of how we can engage a child with special needs in a regular school.

To have more success stories like this, joint action by multiple sectors is needed.

AX's example shows that the most important issue is the teacher and his/her attitude, and the attitudes of all others who are part of the process. It is therefore necessary to have a systematically organised approach to inclusion: increasing resources (human and material); providing additional support for teachers (training, support with implementation and preparing IEPs, etc); and expanding school support teams.

Also, it is necessary to organise frequent workshops to share examples of successful inclusion with teachers, parents, experts and directors. Such workshops could be organised at the local, community or regional level, with the aim of changing the rigid attitudes still present among some teachers, and motivating them to work with students with special educational needs.

This case study is a positive example from our school, about the approach schools should have with students with disabilities, in order for them to develop and achieve results. We hope this study encourages readers to think about what else could be done or what they would have done differently to achieve better results.



Inclusive education
training and
support: plans,
actions and results
- "Lazo Angelovski"
primary school



4. Inclusive education training and support: plans, actions and results

***Vangelina Mojanoska (teacher) and
Dushanka Pankova (teacher)
– “Lazo Angelovski” primary school***

Introduction

Over the last two years a system of services for children with special educational needs has been developed at Lazo Angelovski Primary School. We have been working simultaneously on developing a sensitive local environment and creating conditions for the inclusion of persons with special educational needs through activities in the community.

Most schools in the country feel unprepared for inclusive education, in terms of staffing, programming, technical and physical conditions. A small number of schools have formal inclusion teams. Some of these begin forming in an ad hoc manner, in response to the needs of children or as a result of the demands of the integral evaluations by inspectors from the State Education Inspectorate (SEI).

The situation was such at the Lazo Angelovski Primary School. Although the school had experienced and outstanding teachers, they had not learned about working with people with special educational needs during their formal (undergraduate) education or through subsequent in-service training. Inevitably, teachers felt they lacked the confidence, skills and resources to cope with diverse classes, and felt especially unprepared to teach students who had previously been automatically referred to special schools.

The impact of training

Participation in the training organised by UNICEF encouraged us to explore and devote more attention to this issue. We started with a survey for teachers, to determine their educational needs in this area. We learned that over 60% of the teachers had no pre-service training on special educational needs or inclusion and others had only received such training as an elective subject. We also learned that teachers thought inclusion was only about children with disabilities, not other issues (e.g. poverty, psychological trauma, etc). Teachers thought they did not have inclusion issues in their classes because they didn't have children with severe and profound disabilities in their classes.

We then developed a plan for dissemination of information about inclusive education. During the next trainings organised by UNICEF, we received a lot of guidance material, and then worked on deploying this training. We also prepared several instruments for recording the actions taken.

In November 2012 the school had an Integral Evaluation by Inspectors from the SEI, which said that our school had insufficient evidence of activities with children with special needs. However, in January 2014 another inspection rated our school with the highest grades in terms of inclusion.

The stages of planning for inclusive education in our school

We asked ourselves:

- ▶ What are the benefits and what are the risks?
- ▶ How will we know when we have succeeded?
- ▶ Who / what / how?
- ▶ What can you give, what can you ask for?
- ▶ What support is needed?

Based on these reflections, we developed an action plan for the implementation of inclusive education.

Following the training-of-trainers workshops provided by UNICEF in April and June 2012, a school inclusion team was formed at the start of the 2012/2013 school year. The team consisted of class and subject teachers and professionals.

A survey was conducted to determine teachers' knowledge, attitudes and experience of working with children with special educational needs, and their training needs. The survey found that 83% of teachers in our school had no training on working with children with special educational needs, and 67% of them had not worked with children with special educational needs during their undergraduate teaching studies. Also, 85% of the teachers believed that every teacher should receive training in order to work with these children.

Teachers identified their priority training needs as:

- ▶ Recognising the special needs of students (83%)
- ▶ Adapting curriculum and preparation of special programmes (80%)
- ▶ Using different forms of assessment (85%)
- ▶ Help for socialisation of the child (89%).

Based on the survey results, the school inclusion team developed a programme of workshops for teachers.

Workshop 1 (21 November 2012):

Peers/teachers were encouraged to begin to share their experiences. The workshop provided an understanding of where inclusive education comes from, which influences affect its development, and how the wider social context fits in.

Workshop 2 (8 January 2013):

Peers/teachers introduced the dual ('twin-track') approach as a simple starting point for the implementation of inclusive education from the perspective of the social model.

Workshop 3 (30 August 2013):

Teachers gained practical experience of grading students through portfolios (this covered, for instance, different portfolios for different purposes, the importance of including students in putting together the portfolio, and how to grade them in the most fair way).

Teachers were also introduced to legislation around the implementation of inclusive education (Municipal Law, international and national documents, Salamanca Statement, National Strategy for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

They were further introduced to procedures and instruments for identifying gifted children, and to using IEP forms (they were given directions for preparation).

On 15 November 2013

an inclusive team meeting was held with parents of students with disabilities in the upper classes (grades VI, VII, VIII), and the parents gave their approval for IEPs to be developed for their children.

On 15 January 2014, Workshop 4

was organised. The school inclusion team, along with colleagues/teachers, developed a template for daily preparation of classes for children with special needs. They exchanged experiences, and instruments were considered for monitoring of children with special needs.

The school has developed rules establishing a child's right to an IEP, outlining its implementation and evaluation. The adoption of this process is ongoing. During the training we received countless questions from teachers. Here are some, with our responses:

HOWTO BRIDGE THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL BARRIERS (NEGATIVE ATTITUDES AND BIASES) WITH TEACHERS, PARENTS, THE COMMUNITY?	
Who prepares the IEP?	Teacher with the professionals and parents / guardians
Who is the IEP for?	For each child who has not achieved the expected results
Until when do you have to use an IEP, is the IEP for the student who starts in the first grade?	We need to draw different types of settings, individualisation of instruction and extra-curricular activities; if the student does not progress an IEP is then developed
Must the parent / guardian give consent for an IEP? What are the next steps if there is no agreement?	An IEP cannot be developed without the written consent of the parent. If there is no agreement, the school continues to help and support through an individualised approach
Must the parent / guardian be a member of the team creating the IEP? What if they refuse?	The parent(s) / guardian(s) should be members of the team creating the IEP, but if they refuse, a professional team takes legal measures for inclusion
Who prepares the pedagogical profile of the student?	The teacher and professional workers collect data with different procedures and from different sources
How to determine the individual (adjusted) expected results?	An IEP starts from the strengths, skills and abilities and interests of the student and adjusts the expected results of the curriculum
How much time should now be given to children with special educational needs?	This depends on the needs of the student and teacher , and on the school's preparedness and flexibility to organise work. With good planning and organisation of work, support from peers and selected appropriate adaptation strategies, the teacher will devote his/her time to all students
How are children with an IEP assessed?	According to the method specified in the IEP evaluation, taking into account the expected results. Use of descriptive and numerical assessment in accordance with law, with specific instructions for determining IEP implementation and evaluation and the standards and criteria for evaluating students
What if the IEP does not work (makes no difference)? Will the student repeat the class?	The student who is educated following an IEP cannot repeat. If the IEP did not work, it means that the planned support does not meet the educational needs of the student and that a revision of the IEP is needed.
May the student who at one time had an IEP and achieved the expected results, subsequently be included in class without an IEP?	A student can achieve this, but achievement is regularly monitored and assessed to see to what extent some kind of individualised adjustment is needed.
Are teachers skilled to work with children with special educational needs?	The teacher is trained in the process, and school support professionals can work with children with special needs. Practice shows that about 80% of the success of all students is a result of the application of modern pedagogical methods, and about 20% refers to the application of specific / special educational procedures.

Results

As a result of the above activities, we have observed the following:

In some classrooms

- ▶ teachers transmit quality knowledge to each child
- ▶ there is satisfaction that each child is progressing in line with his/her capabilities
- ▶ there is an improved climate in the classroom
- ▶ teachers use time effectively
- ▶ there is no 'justification' to the other children for some grades
- ▶ each child is engaged in individual work and is trying to do the work
- ▶ teachers have more control in the classroom
- ▶ teachers know what access is required for each child
- ▶ an IEP has been produced for each child with special educational needs
- ▶ teachers easily transfer certain knowledge and skills
- ▶ teachers know what to expect from a child who has an IEP and find it easier to assess the child's IEP progress
- ▶ teachers no longer fear failure
- ▶ other children in the class have the opportunity to learn about diversity and accepting each other's differences
- ▶ classmates give support and assistance to children with special educational needs.

Children with special educational needs

- ▶ are not isolated from peers, but instead socialise and are accepted
- ▶ find it easier to learn and are motivated
- ▶ are more self-confident, with higher self-esteem
- ▶ have the opportunity for advancement
- ▶ have increased attendance at school
- ▶ adopt functional knowledge of life.

The school

- ▶ is available for all children
- ▶ promotes respect for children's rights
- ▶ has created and improved quality conditions for including children with special educational needs
- ▶ benefits from the experience of many teachers and has materials documenting evidence of working with children with special educational needs
- ▶ promotes increased co-operation and exchange of materials among teachers and other schools
- ▶ is evolving the concept of democracy throughout
- ▶ has a growing positive reputation
- ▶ is expecting assistive technology to become available.

The parents

- ▶ have an understanding and support inclusive education
- ▶ feel included (equality)
- ▶ feel sure that their child will finish school
- ▶ receive assistance and psychological support.

Future

In order to keep improving our inclusive education approach, the school inclusion team is planning the following activities:

Letter to parent/guardian

Sending a letter to the parents/guardians of children with special educational needs. This will provide basic information about what an IEP is, why it is needed, and how it is developed. This will help to overcome the prejudice and fear that some parents have.



Dear parents,

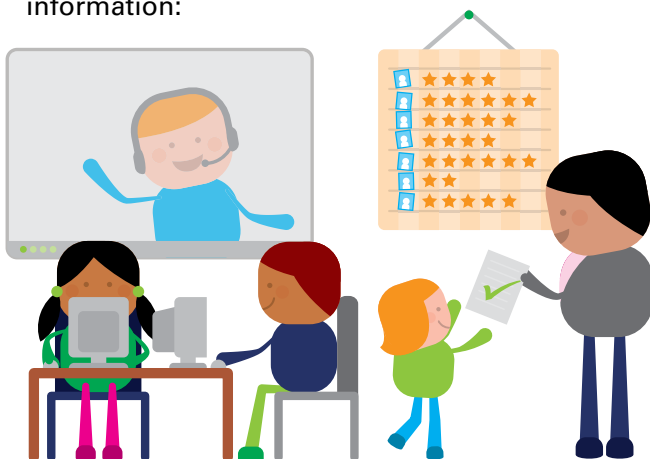
This information briefly describes the process of developing an individual education plan (IEP). An IEP is made when a child has a difficulty, obstacle or needs support in education. The purpose of an IEP is to enable and to support student success.

An IEP is a written plan that includes certain information about the child and gives an overview of the activities in the learning process, undertaken to meet his needs. The IEP describes individualised goals and/or modifications, and provides details of professionals who provide professional help. The school inclusion team prepares the child for inclusion, through a process of consultation and co-operation with you and getting information from you. The preparation of the IEP involves the parent/guardian, professional worker, class teacher and other teachers, but may also include a pedagogue or other qualified person outside the school, which is suggested by the parent/guardian.

You as a parent/guardian are a key participant in the IEP development team. You know your child well, and know his/her abilities and needs. You can provide information on how your child learns, and what his/her interests and abilities are. This way we can ensure your child's progress.

Gathering information from the parent/guardian

In order to determine the parent's/guardian's priorities for the education of their child with special educational needs, and to better recognise the special educational needs of the child, you need to collect the following information:



Dear parents,

It is important to highlight the priorities in your child's education.

This form will provide important information to the professional school team, to make it easier to identify the educational needs of your child.

Name of student:

Name of parent/guardian:

Objectives of parent/guardian:

Physical development:

Social development (friends, interacting with others, behaviour, clubs, sports):

Art (interests, talents):

Emotional development (self-image, difficulty):

Other (changes in friendships, responsibilities, family):

My child has these capabilities (can do):

My child has these needs:

My first priority for my child in current academic year:

I will do this at home to help my child to progress/improve:

Another important priority for my child in this school year is:

Checklist of adjustments

We also have a list of suggested adjustments to share with teachers during the next workshop.

► Physical placement in the classroom:

- Student sitting near the teacher
- Student sitting close to a role model
- Standing near the student when giving instructions or when taught
- Incentives to avoid distraction
- Students organised in groups
- Additional adjustments

► Teaching:

- Students are divided into pairs so they can manage their own work



- ▶ Provide student support (help in learning)
 - ▶ Key words from the lesson are written on the board
 - ▶ Provide visual aids, large print, films, charts, graphs
 - ▶ Teach in a way that engages multiple senses: visual, auditory, cinematographic
 - ▶ Students are asked to repeat instructions they have been given and explain what they understand needs to be done
 - ▶ In addition to oral instructions, students may be given written instructions, as a reminder
 - ▶ Students may be given a written outline/plan with the main concepts of the lesson
 - ▶ Student are allowed to record the class to be able to review it later
 - ▶ Student are asked to give an oral summary of the key words from the lesson
 - ▶ Students are given practical examples
 - ▶ Highlight/underline key parts of the text/lesson so the student can work out the main idea/detail more easily
 - ▶ Longer lessons are split up into smaller parts
 - ▶ Additional adjustments.
- ▶ **Tasks:**
- ▶ Give additional time to finish a task
 - ▶ Simplify complex instructions
 - ▶ Provide simpler and shorter tasks
 - ▶ Require fewer correct answers to complete a task (quality vs. quantity)
 - ▶ Shorten tasks by splitting them into smaller parts
 - ▶ Allow the student to write on the computer or dictate to someone
 - ▶ Use checklists, charts, reminder cards, etc.
 - ▶ Reduce the number of domestic tasks, especially tasks related to reading more
 - ▶ Develop tasks allowing typing with capital letters instead of handwritten
 - ▶ Monitor tasks where the student determines his/her own pace (daily, weekly)
 - ▶ Give student clear and specific guidelines for preparation of homework
 - ▶ Give student clear instructions on how to get his/her homework done.
 - ▶ Commend student's oral activity in class
- ▶ Additional adjustments.
- ▶ **Control exercises and tests:**
- ▶ Allow students to use books to help themselves during a test
 - ▶ Give oral tests
 - ▶ Give tests that are done at home
 - ▶ Allow students to give recorded answers (a voice recorder)
 - ▶ Organise a quiz, instead of a test
 - ▶ Allow extra time to complete a test
 - ▶ The student says the answers and the teacher writes the answers given
 - ▶ Avoid pressure on the student in terms of time or competition
 - ▶ Additional adjustments.
- ▶ **Organisation:**
- ▶ Provide assistance from classmates in the organisation of work
 - ▶ Develop a system for linking notes and tasks
 - ▶ Allocate a volunteering friend who assists with homework
 - ▶ Allow the student to have an additional set of textbooks at home
 - ▶ Prepare a schedule of learning/writing with the student in advance
 - ▶ Send the parent/guardian daily/weekly progress reports
 - ▶ Create a reward system for completing school work and homework
 - ▶ Give the student an interesting notebook for writing assignments
 - ▶ Additional adjustments.
- ▶ **Behaviour:**
- ▶ Simplify the rules in the classroom
 - ▶ Use a timer to facilitate the completion of the task
 - ▶ Determine leisure time
 - ▶ Publicly praise certain behaviour
 - ▶ Use strategies for self-control
 - ▶ Special privileges/incentives and positive directions are given
 - ▶ 'Wisely exploit' negative consequences
 - ▶ Allow short breaks between tasks

- ▶ Remind students to keep going with the task (non-verbal signals)
- ▶ Evaluate the student's correct answers, not his/her mistakes
- ▶ Implement a system of behaviour management in the classroom
- ▶ Allow the students to move about the classroom (eg, when they need to complete something)
- ▶ Ignore some of the students' inappropriate behaviour, which is usually not allowed outside the classroom (so that they get on with their work)
- ▶ The student is given simple responsibilities in the classroom (eg, to take care of teaching aids)
- ▶ Additional adjustments.

Activities and achievements based on the annual work programme of the school inclusion team

- ▶ The teaching work programme is tailored to the developmental, individual and common needs to ensure all students can progress.
- ▶ We are applying various techniques and strategies in the implementation of educational work.
- ▶ There is a growing confidence and self-esteem; training at school helped teachers to get rid of prejudices and fears, and motivated them to work on specific special educational needs.
- ▶ We encourage and foster creativity.
- ▶ There is improved individual creativity in life and work.
- ▶ We apply techniques of creative thinking.
- ▶ We develop co-operative learning.
- ▶ We are improving personal and social development.
- ▶ All children in the local community are enrolled in school and attend regularly.
- ▶ The classes are open to all children.
- ▶ We resolve common problems.
- ▶ We support and collaborate with different groups: employees, students, parents and others in need.
- ▶ We create a warm environment, with full respect for all.
- ▶ All children are equally valued and encouraged.
- ▶ We accept diversity.
- ▶ We respect the child as a person.
- ▶ We use methods that are adapted to the individual needs of the child.
- ▶ We balance the rights of children with special needs and interests, with the goals and interests of their parents or guardians.
- ▶ We provide a suitable place in the classroom for children with special needs, thereby creating conditions for all children to listen and participate at the same time.
- ▶ We maintain a pleasant atmosphere in which neither the teachers nor children are exposed to a lot of stress.
- ▶ We create an atmosphere of acceptance in which we want to help all children.
- ▶ We do not compare children.
- ▶ We provide extra help when it is needed for an individual or small group.
- ▶ We involve children with special educational needs in all / a variety of activities, depending on the abilities the child has.
- ▶ We use a number of visual aids and other materials adapted to the needs of children (mostly manufactured by children or teachers).
- ▶ We use a variety of ways to assess and record the children's progress.
- ▶ The teacher in the inclusive environment prepares an IEP with the involvement of other team members, depending on the needs.
- ▶ We document and monitor student achievement.

We know that "Involvement of all key parties in inclusive education, among other things, means providing opportunities for all children to be successful". We now feel inclusive education is a reality in our everyday work.

All of these actions that we have planned and taken encourage us to continue with an even more rapid pace in this area within our school, and also to network in our municipality and beyond.

Blaze Konevski Primary School has expressed a need and interest to implement inclusive education in their school. They have a clear need for teacher training and specialised service, so they contacted our school inclusion team to ask for assistance and co-operation.

Individual education
planning from an ECD
perspective kindergarten
"Srnicka" and "Buba Mara"



5. Individual education planning from an ECD perspective

**Valentina Zindl (teacher) - kindergarten
"Buba Mara" and Atinula Nicova
(teacher) - kindergarten "Srnicka"**

Introduction

For pre-school children, the kindergarten or early childhood development (ECD) centre is a natural environment for the promotion of all aspects of their development. Children with developmental difficulties need to participate in a regular kindergarten with their peers, in a way that will allow them to develop at their own pace. All children need to play and socialise with other children. Pre-school settings can help children learn, through play, about themselves and others. They are familiarised with their environment, develop speech and communication, social and interaction skills. Peers are a positive role model and support skills development and knowledge acquisition in a way that involves less direct interventions than when children with developmental delays work only with adults.

In addition to the training-of-trainers programme, (focused on the five modules outlined on p.3) through which participants gained a knowledge of inclusive education, we also benefited from a three-day workshop in May 2013, facilitated by Prof. Judith Hollenwerger, on individualised educational planning in inclusive schools. This included an exercise to develop IEPs, based on participants' own case studies. We decided to work on the case of a child who attends our kindergarten. We defined short-term and long-term goals to support and stimulate early development, using ICF-CY as our framework. We were surprised by what we found out. We noticed that those of us who came from the ECD sector found the task easier because we were using the Early Learning and Development

Standards (ELDS) in relation to the ICF-CY. We were pleased to see that we would be able to connect the knowledge from this training with what we already applied in our work related to observation, documentation and assessment of a child's progress, based on ELDS.

This case study includes our personal reflections regarding our participation in the IEP development workshop, based on a specific example from our pre-school practice.

The ECD teacher, parents and the defectologist are included in our case study. During the writing of the study, we applied structured instruments for monitoring child progress (for the 3-4-years age group), ICF-CY, a reflective diary, conversation with the parents, and conversation with the defectologist. We used knowledge gained from the workshop about the most important steps in individual education planning, together with the ELDS assessment instrument (for evaluation of 3-4-year-olds). We collected the information gradually, within one school year, so that we can assess the development progress and the achieved goals.

Issues and challenges

We discussed numerous issues and challenges: What can the child do? How can we help a child who has not established interaction with children and adults in the group? What kind of activities do we need to plan in order to encourage the child to participate and communicate? How can we stimulate his/her development towards achieving the ELDS?

Meeting rights-based and legal obligations

Every child has specific characteristics, interests, abilities and needs. This is why we should take into consideration the different characteristics and pay special attention to every child. But this is not the only issue. The questions may be of different perspective. Due to legislation, children with special needs are included in pre-schools, but are these learning centres sufficiently equipped to respond to the needs and abilities of all children? Are the teachers competent to work with children with disabilities, and what support do they need to more adequately stimulate early learning for all children?

Our country is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 23 refers specifically to children with disabilities and notes that a disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure the child's dignity, promote the child's independence and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. The legislation envisages equal opportunities in education for all children, and we fully support this. However, the kindergarten does not necessarily have all of the conditions to facilitate access and retention of children with disabilities, nor adequate assistive devices to help children adapt more easily to the new environment and support them during their time at the kindergarten.

Educators often feel powerless to cope with the needs of all children because they lack education on working with children with developmental difficulties, and may be facing larger numbers of children in the class/group. Nevertheless, kindergartens are open for all children and the teachers work on adaptations; they work with children individually, they adapt the space, plan and implement activities according to the interests, abilities and needs of all children in the group.

In the last few years ECD has been an area of great interest in the overall political and social environment in Macedonia. The National Programme for the Development of Education in this country, 2005-2015, notes that: *"Early Childhood Development will be one of the priorities of the Government of Macedonia."*

The ELDS were developed as a result of the overall efforts of the Government or the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, to improve the

quality of early learning and development. The process of developing ELDS began in 2006, initiated by UNICEF, in order to create a set of nationally accepted standards for early learning and development that focus on positive outcomes in the holistic development of children aged 0-6 years. One of the guiding principles and values for the development of the ELDS is: *Respect for the personality and individual characteristics, needs, interests and abilities of every child, including children with special needs, and children from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.*

The Law on Child Protection emphasises that programmes implemented in kindergartens/ ECD centres should be based on the ELDS. UNICEF supported training on the new pedagogical record keeping based on the ELDS, for ECD personnel. During the training, the ECD educators/teachers gained knowledge about quality observation of children, based on ELDS, as a way of collecting data for assessing the child's achievements and development. Observations in kindergartens (under the new legislation) use clearly identified methods and forms for recording and documenting observations, which are part of the child portfolio. For us, it was a challenge to use the existing forms and assessment methods for planning and monitoring the early learning and development of children who needed an individualised approach or who had special needs for support to their early learning and development. The effects that we achieved with their use, will be explained in more detail below.



Developing an IEP

Our kindergarten enrolls children with disabilities in the regular groups (classes). During the enrolment process, the professional team talks to the parents and decides in which group the child will be admitted. The selection of a group and a teacher is mainly determined by the number of children in the group and the competencies of the teacher. In the beginning it was a practice to assign these children to the more experienced

teachers. Today the number of children with disabilities enrolled in our kindergarten has increased and we have at least one child enrolled in every group.

This case study focuses on one child who attends our kindergarten. We used the following approach from the IEP training:



Workshop for Individual education planning UNICEF Skopje 07.05.2013

Setting goals

We defined the typical life events/situations in which the child has to be able to participate. We considered the possible future ways in which the child could participate and we defined them as goals (ensuring that the goals were 'SMART' –

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound). We reviewed the ECD curriculum and we linked these goals with the curriculum.

SWOT analysis for observed child

STRENGTHS ▶ Adapted to the new environment ▶ Partially able to dress independently ▶ Recognises learning centres and play ▶ Able to hold a pencil and draw a line ▶ Can repeat movements based on instruction ▶ Understands what is being told	WEAKNESSES ▶ No established group interaction ▶ Uncontrolled movement ▶ No participation in group discussions and games ▶ No communication with children and adults
OPPORTUNITIES ▶ Independent self-care ▶ Able to develop speech ▶ Regular physical and motor development ▶ Participates in collective games ▶ Able to see, to listen, to focus, to undertake tasks, to speak	THREATS ▶ Unacceptance ▶ Difficulties in the learning process ▶ Isolation ▶ Rejection

Goals

- ▶ Attract his attention by holding his hands and watching his face while talking to him.
- ▶ To overcome confusion by repeating the same questions and the same Yes / No answers over a period of three months



Assessment based on ICF-CY and ELDS	Linkages with ICF-CY and ELDS	Required activity based on ICF-CY and ELDS
Unfocused view ELDS domain: Health and motor development ELDS Subdomain: Sensomotor development	b156-Perceptive functions ELDS standard: The child can use his/her senses to regulate movement ELDS indicator: the child turns his/her view to follow something, instead of the neck	b265- Understanding of the touch function Game; first me then you Game: Recognising the touch Invite the child to follow an activity on his/her left or right
Repeating phrases ELDS domain: Language, communication and literacy development ELDS subdomain: Communication	b110- Functions of consciousness b329- Communicating by receiving messages ELDS standard: The child can hear and understands spoken language. ELDS indicator: The child understands the meaning of the spoken word and acts according to a given instruction	Voice game: What I like / don't like Didactic game: Show your favourite fruit Group game with movements: Fruit salad We will ask the child to show us how he/she is washing his/her own hands; or to bring us something from the table; or to go and pass through the tunnel...
Toileting ELDS domain: Socio-emotional development ELDS subdomain: Social development	d-598- Self-care, other specified ELDS standard: the child can distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar adults. ELDS indicator: the child requires assistance from familiar adult.	Frequent reminders to go to the bathroom. Sustainability of the daily routines. Providing help in the everyday activities (washing hands, climbing, going to the toilet, dressing)
Constant uncontrolled movements ELDS domain: health and motor development ELDS subdomain: Gross motor development	d-469- Walking and movement, oriented and uncontrolled ELDS standard: the child can move in a coordinated manner and with a specific goal ELDS indicator: the child accelerates and slows down the movement as required ELDS standard: the child can maintain body balance ELDS indicator: the child maintains balance while running, walking forwards, walking backwards, climbing stairs	d-250- Control their own behaviour (providing support by holding hands) 310-d- Receiving voice messages e310- Conversations with family members e330- Other people and authorities e360- Other professionals When walking outdoors we should provide instructions to the child to follow our walking pace

No established interaction with the environment	d710- basic interpersonal interactions	e310- immediate family e315- extended family e320- friends e325- acquaintances, peers, neighbours E330- other people and authorities e360- other professionals Planned joint celebrations and public events Workshops in the kindergarten and the close (familiar) environment
ELDS domain: Socio-emotional development ELDS subdomain: Social development	ELDS standard: The child can develop social skills through interacting with other children and adults ELDS indicator: the child begins to play with another child ELDS indicator: the child plays games with adults.	

Action and implementation

Once we had set the goals and planned the activities, we proceeded with the next step: action and implementation. We ensured that materials for fostering communication were available (using drawings, cards and other didactic materials). We used the rhythm of music and movement in pairs (children holding hands) to encourage interaction and co-ordination of movements. Activities including use of colouring pens for visual and vocal expression.

The teaching strategies we used included: acceptance of what the child does, encouraging child's efforts and persistence, modelling, demonstrating the correct way of doing things, providing guidance, giving information, helping the child to work according to his/her abilities, and so on.

Control and evaluation

Regarding the last step, control and evaluation, we used the instrument for assessing developmental outcomes for 3-4-year-olds, which was filled in by the teacher through observation and monitoring of the child. This tool is designed to assist educators in applying ELDS in their daily work and interaction with children, and in documenting the child's individual achievement or progress towards certain standards.

Results

The planned goals, strategies and activities are already showing results – the child is accepted by the other children and the teacher, and attends kindergarten regularly. His parents have accepted the teacher's suggestion to seek additional support from a speech therapist. While the child is not achieving all the indicators listed in the instrument, there is a great improvement in his interactions.

Recommendations and future development

The challenge for any teacher is to address the needs of each child in their group/class. The teacher is the first person who makes an assessment, based on observations, and can determine each child's needs and achievements. The teacher is responsible for planning and implementing activities to support the holistic development of children in his/her class.

Based on what we discovered and learned from all of the training modules on inclusive education, we would give the following recommendations:

- ▶ Before enrolling a child with special needs in the kindergarten, it is necessary to inform the parents about the curriculum and the programme implemented by the kindergarten. **Parents need to be involved as partners in the inclusion team.** At the first meeting of the inclusion team it is necessary to provide basic information about the purpose of teamwork, the essence of inclusion and the roles of the individual team members. It is particularly important to emphasise the role of parents in this process and give them basic information on how to continue the support at home. The inclusion team needs to respect the opinion of parents about the goals set for their child, and seek their opinion about their capacity to provide support to their child.
- ▶ When meeting with parents for the first time, it is important to **explain the plan and programme of the kindergarten and inform parents about the characteristics of the inclusive programme.** This offers parents an opportunity to ask questions, overcome prejudices and voice any fears (e.g. about whether inclusion means teachers will direct

all their attention to the children with special needs). It is important to continuously inform and involve parents in the life and work of the kindergarten so that they are aware of their child's progress. Such engagement will also help parents understand that their child is not losing anything by being in an inclusive group, in fact the child is gaining the opportunity to learn how to help others, accept and value diversity and to develop tolerance.

- ▶ Teachers say that it is very important for them to **obtain information about a child's characteristics, interests and the areas where they need special support, before the child is enrolled in the group.** It is important that teachers collaborate and communicate with any institutions that previously supported the child, and use the summer period to familiarise the child with the kindergarten through informal visits before they are enrolled.
- ▶ **Creating a pleasant atmosphere in the group and fostering cooperative rather than competitive relationships** between the children is an important aspect of making education more inclusive. It may be necessary to organise occasional sessions with children about accepting diversity. For instance, if a child with physical or sensory difficulties is enrolled in the group, the teacher may organise activities through which they empathise with their friend's capabilities and think about how they can jointly overcome obstacles.
- ▶ **Each individual plan to support early learning and development should be prepared by the inclusion team.** The inclusion team should record progress through a monthly review of achievements, and conduct a review of the plan after three months of implementation. The ELDS assessment checklist should be filled in at the beginning and the end of the

year. This will provide a clear insight into the child's interests and needs, potential and opportunities, and will enable the identification of areas in which the child needs support.

Our reflections

The practical implementation of inclusion requires time and patience. Success does not only depend on material conditions. The process of change will be easier if it is supported by positive attitudes and generally accepted inclusive ideas and values. When it comes to inclusion, the interaction between children is very important, but it should be well designed and implemented in a positive atmosphere with an open heart.

There are benefits of inclusion for all participants in the inclusive kindergartens:

Children with special needs:

- ▶ Achieve better social integration and socialisation, supporting development of the sense of security, satisfaction and self-esteem
- ▶ Develop communication skills, and capabilities to express their own needs, desires and intentions in verbal and non-verbal ways, encouraging physical development.

Children without developmental difficulties:

- ▶ Develop empathy and sensitivity to the needs of children with developmental disabilities, and develop respect for diversity.

Parents of children with special needs:

- ▶ Acquire a positive experience of the abilities of their child
- ▶ Develop a partnership which provides support and encouragement to parents in their effort to do as much as possible for their child.

Teachers:

- ▶ Develop their professional competences for working with children with special needs
- ▶ Develop empathic relationships with children and their parents.

