



# Community As Resources: Developing Relationship Between School And Community

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**Abstract:** This study explores school-community partnerships to promote inclusive and quality education and to make inclusion more meaningfully successful as successful inclusive education requires mobilizing the cooperation of families, as well as the support of the community, voluntary organizations, and the general public. Leveraging community resources and local partnerships fosters high-quality educational and enrichment opportunities; this is because it broadens the scope of experiences typically offered to all students particularly those with special needs while simultaneously enhancing their access to local expertise (Kaushik, 2019). Parents should also play a role in formulating policies related to inclusion. They should be involved in supporting the changes necessary to develop inclusive schools. Teachers holding senior positions bear a responsibility toward the wider community as well; they should not only strive to improve or develop their own schools but also collaborate with stakeholders outside the school premises (Sharma, 2021). When families and communities stand united with educational institutions, they ensure that inclusion is not merely a policy mandate but a lived reality, providing every child, regardless of ability, with the equal opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

**Key Words:** Inclusive education, Inclusive practices, School-community partnerships, Community resources, Family support

## Introduction

Inclusive education stands in the principle that every child, irrespective of his/ her innate abilities or challenges, has a basic right to learn and grow in tandem with his/ her peers in neighbourhood Educational Institutions. It marks a significant socio-cultural evolution moving away from isolation and toward a model of belonging. However, the success of this pedagogical goal cannot be achieved by educational institutions in isolation it should include a broader collaborative ecosystem. True inclusion is a partnership where the child, who lives within a family and a community, is supported by a cohesive ecosystem that transforms education from a service delivered in a building into a shared social value. When schools, families, and communities work in tandem, they build a strong support system that promotes equality and ensures that inclusion is not just a policy but a lived reality.

Addressing the academic, behavioural, communication and social needs of every learner can be a challenge for every teacher, particularly in diverse classrooms comprising students with diverse needs such as general education students, students with disabilities, emerging bilingual students, and academically gifted students. To facilitate the social success and adjustment of every student of diverse classroom settings, teachers should manage the classroom's social environment in a manner that promotes an inclusive and collaborative community. To achieve this, it would be beneficial for teachers to view the classroom as a society and to adopt a "person-in-context" perspective to support children's social development, learning, and behavioural adjustment (Farmer et al., 2019).

## **Families as the primary pillar of inclusive education**

Inclusive education stands on the principle that everyone is a member of mainstream society so every child must have the right to learn and grow in mainstream educational setting with his/ her peers. This pedagogical goal, however, cannot be achieved by educational institutions in isolation. The family serves as the most critical partner in a child's inclusive journey because parents and caregivers are the "original experts" on their children. They possess a unique depth of knowledge that cannot be found elsewhere, encompassing the child's entire history—from their first spoken words and medical background to the specific gestures and behaviours that signal anxiety or joy. This intimate understanding allows families to provide educators with a holistic understanding of the student bridging the gap between the student seen for a few hours in a classroom and the individual with complex emotional and developmental needs.

Empowering these parents is absolutely essential to ensure meaningful inclusion. Proponents of this perspective believe that such empowerment is possible only if school systems adopt alternative structural arrangements that provide parents with the opportunity to have a voice in the administration of educational institutions (Ryan, 2002). They firmly believe that empowering parents will assist schools in serving their children more effectively, as these parents will pave the way for the school's efforts to meet the students' needs and goals. By participating more actively in their children's education, parents will be more satisfied with their children's schools; consequently, they will become more committed to the educational process as a whole. The ultimate outcome of this will be reflected in enhanced student achievement (Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995).

Historically, educators often viewed their role as instructing parents on how to assist at home; however, modern inclusive practices have reversed this dynamic. Parental involvement is crucial for the education of children of all ages, but it is absolutely essential for the success of young children in inclusive environments (Filler & Xu, 2006). In virtually all contemporary literature on mainstreaming Children with Special Needs (CWSN), the role of the parents is recognized as significant and authoritative. Teachers now actively seek out information from parents, recognizing that they hold up-to-date knowledge on their child's disabling conditions, strengths, likes, and dislikes. Families are essential in identifying the activities most needed for a child to function effectively at home and in the community.

Beyond serving as a source of information, families operate as the child's foundational and most persistent educators, responsible for cultivating independence by teaching daily living skills and basic household tasks. In inclusive early childhood programs, active family involvement has long been considered a significant factor associated with improved educational outcomes for young children—both with and without disabilities (Berger, 1995; Levy, Kim, & Olive, 2006; Pérez Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005). Research has demonstrated that high levels of parental involvement are linked to better academic performance, higher test scores, more positive attitudes toward school, higher rates of homework completion, fewer placements in special education, academic persistence, lower dropout rates, and fewer suspensions (Christenson, Hurley, Sheridan, & Fenstermacher, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Pérez Carreón, et al.).

Within the home, they create an environment of open communication that builds the emotional resilience and positive attitude necessary for a child to navigate the challenges of an inclusive classroom. While most CWSN are loved and accepted, some face the risk of discrimination or overprotection. It is within the family that the child's right to love, security, respect, and social interaction must first be anchored. By fostering after-school learning and monitoring attendance and leisure time—even in socially or economically deprived settings—families exert a powerful influence on their children's academic success and future career options. Moreover, families act as the preeminent advocates and protectors of their children's fundamental rights. Families of children with disabilities are essential agents of change who shape policy by participating in advocacy networks and engaging with national and international agencies. On a local level, they can build direct partnerships with school administrators to encourage welcoming all children, while simultaneously collaborating with larger organizations for facilitating the diverse needs of all the students.

Actualizing such collaboration needs institutions to must mitigate the distance between the institution and the domestic sphere by creating a professional climate where parents are recognized as equitable partners in pedagogical process. Programs should be designed to facilitate robust two-way communication, involving parents in high-level decision-making, planning, and assessment. When families are empowered as expert partners, they ensure that inclusion is not just a policy mandate but a lived, daily reality that provides every child with the opportunity to thrive.

### **Bridging the home-school divide**

Effective inclusive education is contingent upon the support a child receives at school connects seamlessly to their life at home, and families are acting as the architects of this connection. In recent times, discussions surrounding inclusion have also gained ground within the realm of school-community relations. Reformers, educators, and practitioners have endeavoured to involve parents and their respective communities in the functioning of schools. These efforts have taken two forms, which Louis and Nakagawa (1995) term 'empowerment' and 'enablement.'

This partnership recognizes that learning does not stop when the school bell rings. The actualization of a student's pedagogical success and socio-emotional maturation is mainly contingent upon a cohesive alliance between parents and teachers. Families can contribute practical suggestions for curricular adjustment and the strategic modification of teaching methods to facilitate an equitable learning environment. Regular communication through parent-teacher meetings facilitates an ongoing dialogue, allowing families to reinforce classroom skills at home and provide informed support with homework.

The benefits of this high level of family involvement are extensive and measurable. When families and educators work as partners, students achieve greater academic success, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background. Parental involvement is also closely linked to the actions of teachers. For instance, Anderson and Minke (2007) found that specific invitations from teachers were strongly correlated with parental involvement behaviours, particularly among minority and low-income families. They suggested that when parents perceive that teachers desire their involvement, they often overcome barriers to participation—even if they possess limited resources. Brown and Medway (2007) examined the relationships among school climate, teacher expectations, and instructional practices in an elementary school with a high percentage of low-income and minority students. They found that when teachers valued parental suggestions and family involvement, they developed strategies to facilitate communication between home and school.

For the child, seeing their family actively participating in their education boosts self confidence and empowers them to use their abilities with greater self-esteem. Integrating the longitudinal knowledge gained from families allow for a more holistic understanding of the student's profile, which serves as a more personalized and creative teaching strategies. Ultimately, this partnership transforms the school culture, making it warmer and more successful at helping all students thrive. Moving beyond a basic open-door policy means schools must be intentional about building relationships by diversified meeting formats and linguistic accommodations and creating clear policies that treat parents as true partners.

### **The community as an extended support system**

If the family is the foundation, the community is the surrounding ecosystem that creates the environment where a child genuinely feels they included. A supportive community challenges stereotypes and fosters a culture of acceptance where diversity is valued. When Community members, organizations, and local leaders come together, they transform the social fabric of education by providing resources and awareness programs that support school efforts. This involvement transforms the social landscape; local businesses can offer internships and vocational training, while community organizations can provide inclusive after-school programs and recreational activities. Furthermore, community members can be powerful advocates for inclusion by joining school boards and speaking out in support of policies that promote the rights of all learners.

Over time, these efforts have heightened awareness regarding students' social needs and the significant opportunities for social development available to children and youth—particularly when they receive their education alongside peers who differ from them in terms of abilities, as well as their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Carter, 2018; Dare & Nowicki, 2018; Gottfried, 2014). When teachers are aware of the relationships among students and their peer groups within the classroom, they can utilize this information to guide their instructional methods and classroom behaviour management; by doing so, it becomes more feasible for them to create a social environment that supports learners with diverse needs (Hamm, Farmer, Dadisman, Gravelle, & Murray, 2011; Norwalk, Hamm, Farmer, & Barnes, 2016).

One of the most vital roles the community plays is in the proactive identification and early support of children with disabilities. Local health workers and pre-school teachers are uniquely positioned to notice developmental delays early on. For instance, an early intervention by a community teacher who connects a family with a screening center can change the entire trajectory of a child's life.

Once a disability is identified, the community must work to dismantle fear and stigma through awareness sessions that celebrate the strengths and abilities of individuals. Networking is essential here, as it creates a "web of support" that connects the community to government bodies, NGOs, and specialized institutions. By mobilizing human resources—such as a retired teacher offering extra support or a local carpenter building a ramp—the community ensures that inclusion is supported by the skills and compassion of its people. School communities that value and respect their members—and provide a safe learning environment for everyone to express their ideas, raise awareness, and collectively develop their capabilities—are more likely to be inclusive. This outcome depends particularly on how leaders facilitate teachers' engagement in constructive and critical learning, and how they adapt their beliefs and methodologies to address the needs of diverse learners within an inclusive school culture (Carrington & Robinson, 2006).

### **Overcoming Barriers through Collaboration**

Despite the benefits of collaborative inclusion, several barriers often hinder the progress of inclusive education. Physical barriers, such as inaccessible buildings and dangerous pathways create tangible hurdles for many students. Even more damaging are deep-seated attitudinal biases rooted in stigma and misinformation, such as the belief that a child with a disability is a "burden" or that they will "slow down" their peers. Inclusion should not be viewed as a practice in which learners with diverse needs feel like guests in general classrooms, while students who do not receive special services are taught to be polite hosts who merely tolerate and accept them. Instead, it is everyone's classroom, and everyone has distinct needs—whether they are identified as general education students, students with disabilities, academically gifted students, or emerging bilingual students (Farmer et al., 2019). Research focuses on the significance of peer relationships—specifically, friends—in adolescent development. For instance, Erik Erikson found that peer affiliations are essential for the development of a healthy identity in adolescents; one reason for this is that these affiliations provide young people with opportunities to explore new interests, relationships, and ideologies (Erikson, 1968; Swanson, Spencer, & Petersen, 1998).

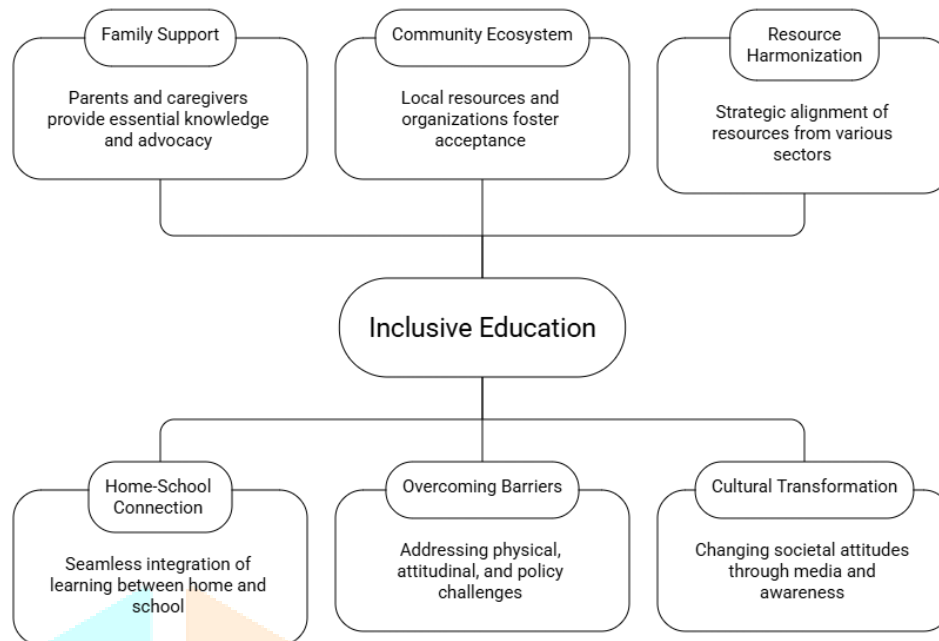
Communication barriers, where information is not provided in accessible formats like sign language or large print, can exclude both students and parents from the educational process. Finally, policy barriers often exist where a gap remains between well-intentioned national laws and their practical implementation on the ground. Within the context of a policy landscape that enshrines education as a fundamental component of individual rights, the general education classroom is increasingly being viewed as a collaborative space in which parents, administrators, teachers, and researchers engage to support a diverse range of learners (Alderson, 2018; Collier & Thomas, 2014; Cross, Frazier, Kim, & Cross, 2018).

By bringing specialized services directly into the home strategies like Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) makes support a natural part of a child's daily routine. Family-to-family support networks also play a crucial role in mitigating isolation caused by socio-economic or language barriers. By establishing local support groups, experienced families can mentor others, sharing practical knowledge and empowering them to become confident advocates. These local initiatives can eventually join larger national and international networks, amplifying their collective voice to build a truly inclusive society. When families and communities stand united with schools, they ensure that every child, regardless of ability, has the equal opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

### **Strategic harmonization of community resources**

A fundamental aspect of sustainable inclusion is the strategic mobilization and harmonization of diverse resources across three primary sectors: internal resources from the family and community, government agencies, and private entities including NGOs and corporations. In regions like India, the non-governmental sector plays a particularly transformative role by piloting innovative strategies that eventually influence national policy. Bridging the gap between specialized centres and mainstream schools is essential for creating a resource-rich environment. Special schools, for instance, are increasingly evolving into resource centers that provide essential support services, such as teacher training, vocational materials, and specialized assessment tools. The primary challenge for educational administrators lies in the effective "positioning" of these resources—ensuring that the right expertise and materials reach the right students at the right time.

## Building Inclusive Education Together



**Figure1:** The Model on developing relationship between school and community

### Cultural transformation and awareness

Changing societal attitudes is perhaps the most significant challenge in the journey toward inclusion. The mass media acts as a driving force in this transformation by promoting positive attitudes, overcoming prejudice, and infusing the public with empathy regarding the capabilities of persons with disabilities. Through various mediums—ranging from workshops and seminars to folk songs, street plays, and puppets—the community can be informed about successful inclusive experiences. This awareness is crucial for encouraging employers to hire persons with disabilities and for fostering a general atmosphere of optimism. When local media and personal interactions are used to identify and address context-specific needs, they create a social fabric that values diversity as strength rather than a deficit.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the success of inclusive education is not a goal that can be achieved within the confines of a classroom alone; rather, it is deeply rooted in the active and constant support of both the family and the broader community. Families serve as the foundational pillar, acting as their child's first teachers, strongest advocates, and lifelong supporters. By bringing a deep and unparalleled understanding of their child's unique strengths, needs, and aspirations, they enable schools to design more effective and personalized learning plans. When families are recognized not merely as helpers but as essential partners and experts on their own children, the entire educational experience is transformed into a collaborative journey that fosters confidence, resilience, and a sense of empowerment in the learner.

Furthermore, the community plays an equally transformative role by creating a supportive ecosystem that extends beyond school walls. A community that actively participates in the inclusive process works to challenge negative stereotypes, dismantles attitudinal barriers, and mobilize vital resources—ranging from human skills and volunteerism to accessible infrastructure and early identification services. Through the establishment of family-to-family support networks and partnerships with local organizations, the community ensures that no parent feels isolated and that every child has a platform to participate in cultural, social, and recreational life. When families and communities stand united with educational institutions, they ensure that inclusion is not merely a policy mandate but a lived reality, providing every child, regardless of ability, with the equal opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

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