

**Supporting HIV-Positive Learners in Inclusive Classes
in South Africa: Is It the Responsibility of Teachers?**

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ABSTRACT The adoption of White Paper 6 of 2001 in South Africa on the implementation of inclusive education has become an important milestone to ensure the accommodation of the full range of learner needs in ordinary schools. This paper deals with the rights and needs of HIV-positive learners and their first line of support, namely ordinary teachers, who form the backbone of support within the inclusive classroom. At the moment, learners living with HIV miss out frequently on help and support because specialist out-of-school HIV and AIDS services are not geared towards their needs. Teachers, on the other hand, experience various demands due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic (especially in Southern Africa). In most schools there are no dedicated staff employed to provide support and counseling to learners (or teachers). It is, therefore, of great importance that question be asked if it is the responsibility of teachers to deal with HIV-positive learners in a confident way. The objective of this paper is to clarify the range of special needs to be included in ordinary classes, with specific reference to learners who are HIV positive, and to focus on the challenges and demands this situation places on teachers. Teachers' attitudes towards HIV-positive learners will be scrutinized in order to challenge and possibly reframe their roles and responsibilities towards these learners and to finally equip them to contribute to the social and emotional inclusion of this group of learners.