

The Path to Inclusive Education Systems

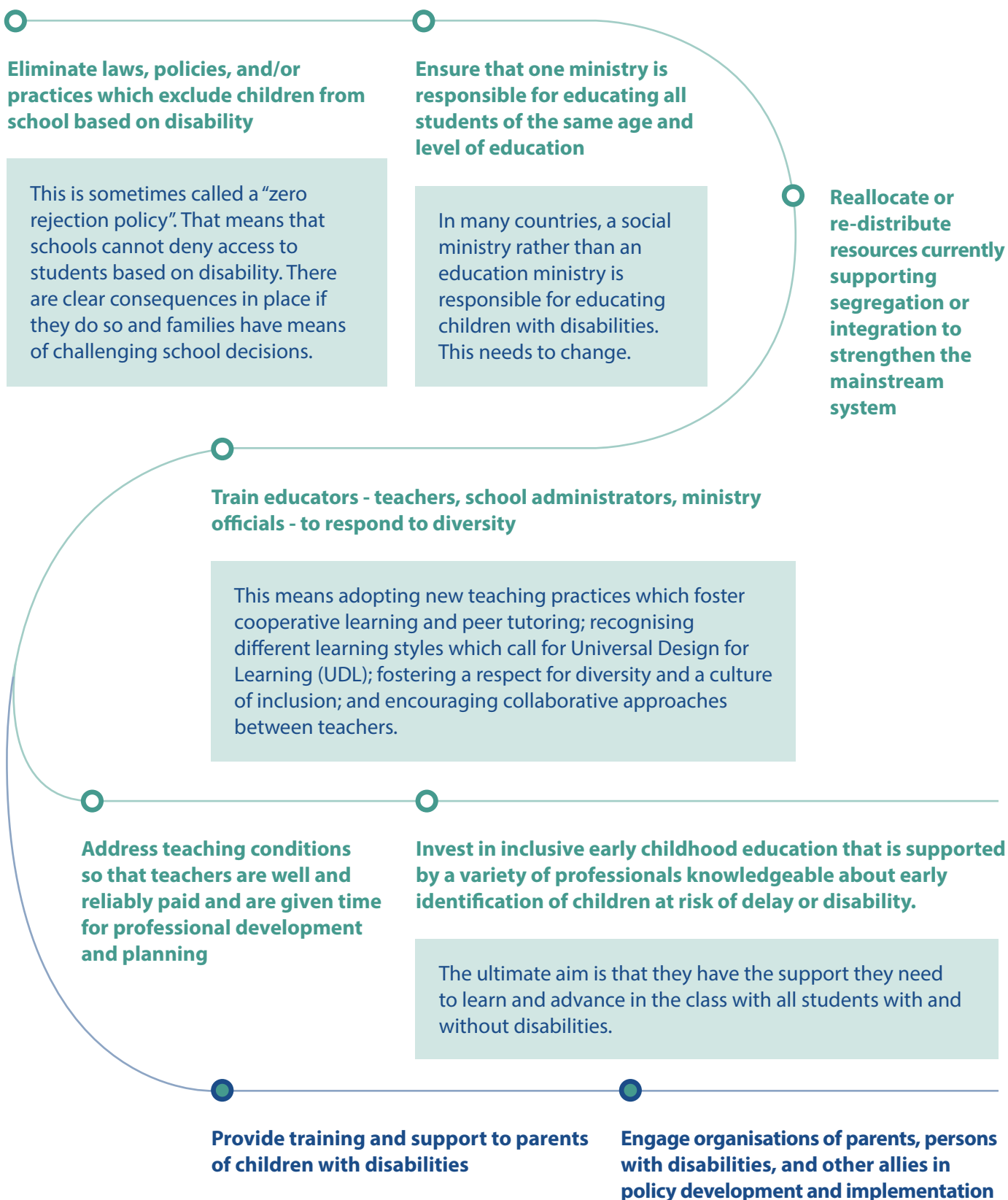
What changes are we asking for to create an inclusive education system?

There are 6 key ingredients for building an inclusive system that governments must take action on:

- 1 One ministry is responsible for all students of the same age and level of education (for example the ministry responsible for early childhood education should also be responsible for early childhood education of children with disabilities; the ministry responsible for primary education of children without disabilities should be responsible for educating children with disabilities as well, etc.).
- 2 There is only one system/model of education where all children learn together in inclusive classes where children with and without disabilities are learning together. "Special" classes/settings/schools do not exist.
- 3 Students go to the same school they would have attended if they did not have a disability, are educated alongside their non-disabled peers and receive the supports they need to participate and learn.
- 4 Teachers are trained and supported on how to individualise their teaching using different methods for different learning styles.
- 5 School culture values diversity - all students are welcome, participate and achieve.
- 6 Schools have access to the financial and human resources to support inclusion.



The steps toward implementation of inclusive education may be different depending on the specific country, and may also occur in a different order. Not all the steps below are necessary in all countries, but are some of the most commonly taken:



There is no one singular path to achieve an inclusive education system, and different countries propose different solutions. It is important for families to look critically at these proposed solutions and compare them to definitions of a truly inclusive school system.

For example

Transforming special schools into resource centres is one strategy for moving towards inclusive education that some countries consider.

There is not a lot of research on the effectiveness of transforming special schools into resource centres which can provide support to inclusion. However, reports from organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) warn that specialists who have worked in segregated settings may not have the skills to offer support for inclusion. Resource centre workers usually work based on impairments and diagnoses rather than on how to deliver inclusive practice to meet the individual needs of all students. Sometimes repurposing special schools as resource centres is a way to reduce criticism of inclusion by special education teachers, who may be

resistant to systems change. If special schools are used as resource centres, it is important that the commitment to inclusion is clear, that the teachers who have been teaching in the special schools are well trained in inclusive practices (transform their practices). If this strategy is used, families have a key monitoring role here to ensure the resource centre is not used as a place for teaching groups of students with disabilities (replicating segregation), but that it is used as a 'library' of material and human resources that support regular education teachers' work toward ensuring the participation of all children in the learning process.

Your turn: The path to inclusive education

Find your starting point – where is your community on the path to inclusive education? Where can families step in to help move the system further down the path towards inclusion?

