



## **SUPPORTING PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

Vanessa Le Roux (Master's student in Inclusive Education) and Dr Jean Fourie from the Department of Educational Psychology, presented a paper at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual 'Teaching Practice Symposium.' The conference took place in October 2017, hosted by North West University, Vaal Triangle Campus.

This paper explored the support needs of parents who have children with mild intellectual disabilities in a Gauteng special needs class. Parenting a child with an intellectual disability is stressful and teachers often have to deal with parent frustrations and insecurity. Responding to parents' concerns individually is particularly challenging where teachers and parents speak different languages. Initially we investigated parents' needs and teachers' challenges in supporting parents who speak indigenous languages. Qualitative data were collected from an open ended questionnaire and two in-depth focus group interviews with parents. Thematic content analysis determined that parents need intense support from both the teacher and other parents. Parents were unsure about the functioning of the special class; needed advice regarding everyday challenges of parenting and expert information regarding the child's disability, prognosis and future. Thereafter the teacher facilitated multi-lingual parent to parent support interventions. We argue that parent partnerships framed in a common language of understanding are critical in the dynamics of educating children with intellectual disabilities.

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