

# A TEAM EFFORT!

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There is an African proverb that says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” JC Niala explains that in Kenya, “It is not just relatives and friends but anyone who interacts with a child has a responsibility for them. ... if someone sees a child doing something wrong or getting into danger then they will step in even before asking the parent if they can intervene.”

Comparisons can be made between the thinking involved with the raising of a child in Africa and the education of a child in our modern-day schools. In a typical primary school, it is the role of a principal and leadership team to set the priorities and direction for a school. This team also provides support for the rest of the staff and students in the school. Teachers generally fall into one or more of the following categories: leading teacher, generalist classroom teacher or specialist teacher.

In my case, I am a generalist classroom teacher. I have a class of students that I teach for the majority of the week in a variety of different subject areas. However, just as I am not solely responsible for the students in my class, neither are these students the only ones in the school who I am responsible for. Similar to a child raised in Kenya, it is a team effort! Within a school, there are many members of the ‘team’ that play different yet important roles, in the education of its students!

In a primary school, students are predominately taught by one or sometimes two classroom teachers. One or more specialist teachers will also teach the students throughout the week. Specialist teachers focus on particular subject areas, such as Art, Physical Education, a Second Language, etc. Even though each child spends the majority of their time with his or her classroom teacher/s, specialist teachers also play a valuable role in contributing to a child’s learning, by providing them with teaching and learning in specialized areas of the curriculum.

Another member of the ‘team’ that may be found in some classrooms are Education Support (ES) Staff. ES staff assist the teacher and work with individual or small groups of students. They play a valuable role in supporting the physical, emotional and learning needs of students. In particular, ES Staff work with and assist students that require extra support in the classroom and/or the schoolyard.

The classroom is not the only place where ES staff can be found. In an office, they play a vital role in the smooth day-to-day operation of a school. Office staff perform many important roles, such as: monitoring student attendance/absences, administering first aid, collecting money, collating and publishing information to inform parents (newsletters, notes, etc.). The office staff is often the first point of contact for parents and is also a valuable support for teachers. In addition, therapists, counsellors, psychologists, etc. are also ES staff and they are often called upon to work with teachers to support students.

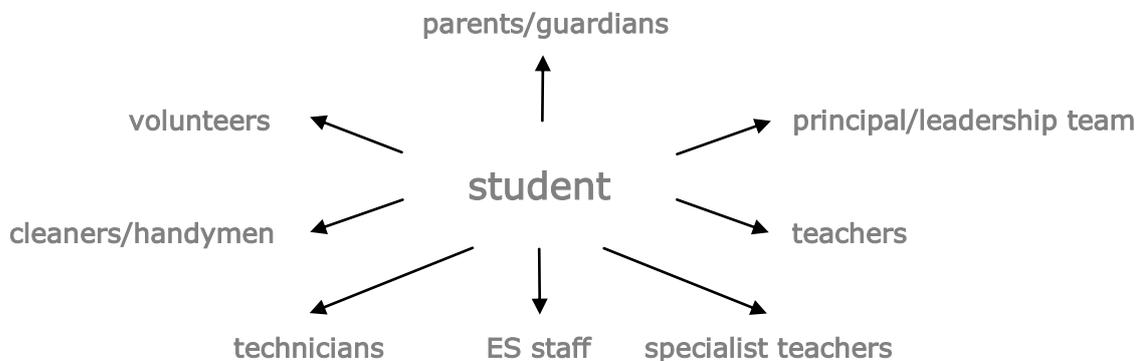
There are other ‘team’ members that also contribute towards supporting a student within a school environment. Specialist Technicians oversee technical support to schools and maintain the computers, printers and software, so that students and teachers can access them for teaching and learning. Cleaners maintain the cleanliness of a school, whilst handymen ensure that students are working in a safe environment.

Volunteers such as parents or community members are also a part of the ‘team’ that supports each student in a school. Volunteers may help out in a variety of ways, such as assisting a teacher in an area of expertise, working with students, helping with fundraising, becoming a part of a committee, etc. Volunteers are valued ‘team’ members, whose input is very much appreciated.

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The final, yet very important member of the 'team' is a child's family. Parents/guardians are a child's initial educators; they play a pivotal role in their child's education. Therefore, a strong partnership between family and school can be very beneficial for the child. High levels of family involvement and support can help to improve a child's learning, behaviour and attendance and ultimately, foster a lifelong love (or desire) for learning.

So as you can see, there is much input from many people with differing skill sets, to facilitate the education of a child. Just as in Kenya it takes "a village to raise a child", it takes a 'team' to educate a child in our modern-day schools. Students benefit from the unique skills and understandings that each individual has to offer, and as parties work together, they all share the responsibilities and rewards of providing a quality-learning environment. As Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."



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