



January 2021

As we come to the end of 2021 I wanted to wish you all the very best for 2022. Again we face an uncertain year with COVID 19 still interfering with our day to day life and efforts to establish as normal a school day as possible. I would like to wish you all the very best for the rest of the school year and hopes that you can continue to work in person!

This has been a busy but interesting year for me, with work in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, and now a possible student in Ghana! Some of this has been in person, some on line and some a blended model of in person for part and online for part when timing has been tight or opportunity limited.

I continue to build and adapt my reports so I can maximise the information I can derive from an assessment and the introduction of evaluating executive functioning for all the students has, I believe, been a worthwhile addition. It does mean the time I am putting into the reports has grown, as has the report itself, but I consider executive functioning to be an important kingpin to learning that is often forgotten or missed. The fact that it can be improved and developed is further reason to explore and develop its role. Needless to say my doctoral focus on mental health, specifically the role of resilience and teachers' role in building resilience also informs and guides my assessments.

I do have challenges with getting the parents and teachers to complete the teacher feedback form and the developmental history. I send an introductory letter which has the links, and as much as possible we have tried to make it as clear and concise as possible. Waiting for these forms often delays the completion of the report, so I would like to put out a plea to the schools, to help me collect this information in a timely manner. It is important that they are completed by someone who has known the student for at least 4 months.

I now travel with a set of child strength essential oils which I offer the students to help their confidence, anxiety, or attention and to help with orientation and rapport. It has been an interesting experience to say the least! One student was so taken by the 'calmer' mix, that he put some in his face mask. Mum sent back a message the next day asking for 200 bottles! It seems the calming effect persisted over into the evening and home. I think this is another example of the importance of considering the whole child when completing an evaluation. Too often I am asked to assess for something very specific such as dyslexia or ADHD. I do try and encourage a more comprehensive evaluation, especially for the first time, as there may be a surprising breakdown in learning that is affecting the student in an unusual way. Getting the 'whole picture' is important and helps inform the way forward.



Resources

I have managed to negotiate a free trial period of a month for the **PAGS® Profile** (more information on my website), so if you would like to try it for 10 or 20 students in the school, get in touch and we can discuss the way forward.

I would like to introduce **Meghna of RDI Africa**, who is offering a great service supporting students. This is her message:

When I first meet parents (especially those who have just received their child's diagnosis), they often share feelings of helplessness, confusion, desperation and despair. These overwhelming symptoms are signs of functioning within a crisis mindset. In this place, we cannot carefully think things through, reflect on our past experience, or consider our longer-term goals. Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) is a program being used internationally to equip families of children that have neurologically based development challenges, to normalize their lives and regain a sense of productive progress in their family or individual growth process. As an RDI Certified Consultant, I work to help you find ways to restore your unique parenting perspective. This means continuing to care about the here-and-now, but also making sure you are prioritizing building essential foundations for your child's success.

Meghna Visaria

RDI Certified Consultant (November 2021)

M.Ed in Special Education (May 2017)

You can contact Meghna on rdiforafrika@gmail.com or visit her Facebook page on <https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100065506814640>

Redefining Inclusion also continues to offer training for parents, teachers and shadows who work with neurodiverse children both in and out of the mainstream setting. This course engages participants by looking at neurodiversity from a progressive perspective and equipping them to support these learners in achieving their true potential. Please contact us for more information about the next 8 week course on offer. Find out more on <https://inclusivity.education/redefining-inclusion/>

Thinking Schools South Africa offer some fantastic courses at very accessible prices. I am attaching their latest newsletter. I am in discussion with TSSA about the idea of a regional series of in person training workshops. If you are interested, please contact me, so we can plan an amazing series of professional development training within East Africa.

Finally, the deadline for exam access is looming, so be careful not to be caught out. This can be done online or in person. I continue to keep my workload to a minimum as I focus on my research, so do please plan ahead and get in touch in advance to avoid disappointment.



I do have a current police clearance, and I have also had a Pfizer booster now, so when I am not on the farm minding my own business, I do feel better protected!

As always, I look forward to working with you again this year. Let's hope we get to the end of it in one piece!

Scilla