In this Issue

SM&L

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Dear Readers

My apologies for the late publication of this edition - partly due to my spending the past six weeks in the Eastern Cape monitoring the NATED 550 project for the Department of Education (National). It was an opportunity not to be missed as it gave me some good insights into some of the challenges of education in that province.

One of the many things that struck and surprised me as I criss-crossed the province, visiting schools and district offices, was the number of relatively new, well-built, face-brick schools that I came across, particularly in the rural areas. The offices of principals and district officials, although mostly spartan relative to those of the more affluent former Model C schools, were virtually all equipped with the basic necessities for the effective management of schools, including telephones, photocopiers and PCs. It would seem, therefore, that the generally disappointing performance of the Eastern Cape Education Department in terms of SC results cannot easily be attributed simply to poor physical infrastructure or lack of physical resources. I hope to return to the Eastern Cape later in the year in my capacity as Editor of *SM&L* to talk to principals and others in leadership positions in that province to gain insights into the management and teaching in schools and to hear their views about the problems and their opinions of what needs to be done to address them.

A significant portion of this issue is devoted to recent legislation and policy changes which we believe will have a significant impact on the way schools are managed and governed. We also review and comment on two recent DoE (N) publications, one dealing with pupil retention within the school system and the other dealing with the incidence and reasons for pupil absenteeism. We trust that you will find them helpful and informative.

Alan Clarke

(Editor)

Services to subscribers

The Ednews website (www.ednews.co.za) has recently been completely redesigned. Downloads of back copies of *SM&L*, sample policy files from *The Handbook of School Management* (courtesy of the publisher), and certain relevant education-related legislation can now be made from the website. Links to useful education-related websites will be added in the near future, as well as a news section, in which we will post items which we feel are relevant and will be of interest to our readers.

The sample policy files from *The Handbook of School Management* are also available on DVD in both pdf format and an editable Word format. These can be ordered from Ednews at the nominal fee of R50.00 to cover the handling and postage costs. Post, fax or e-mail your order to Ednews (HSM Policy DVD) using our contact details provided at the bottom of the page. Payment may be made by cheque (payable to Ednews) or by direct transfer to our bank account (ABSA Claremont, Branch Code: 421 109, Account No. 9190434497).

Policy

Education Laws Amendment Act of 2007

The Education Laws Amendment Act (Act 31 of 2007) has a number of important implications for schools, for principals and for governors.

The Education Laws Amendment Act (Act 31 pf 2007) which was signed into Law at the end of last year has a number of important implications for schools, for principals and for governors. The Act amends a number of pieces of education legislation, including the following which affect schools:

- National Education Policy Act

- South African Schools Act

- South African Council of Educators Act

- General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act

In brief, these amendments deal with the following matters:

<u>National Education and Training Forum</u>:

The minister may, by regulation, establish an advisory body to be known as the National Education and Training Forum. (NETF)

<u>Definition of "Dangerous object" and "Illegal drug"</u>:

A "dangerous object", an "illegal drug" and a "school activity" are defined for the purposes of the SASA (These definitions are provided in boxes elsewhere on this page).

<u>Minimum norms and standards</u>:

The minister may prescribe, by regulation, the minimum norms and standards for the following:

- School infrastructure (including classrooms, electricity, water, sanitation, a library, laboratories for science, technology, mathematics and life sciences)

- the capacity of the school in terms of the number of learners the school can admit (including number of teachers and class size, quality of performance of a school, the curriculum and extra-curricular choices, classroom size and the utilisation of available classrooms by the school)

- the provision of learning and teaching support materials (including the availability of stationery and supplies, learning material, teaching material and equipment, science, technology, mathematics and life science apparatus, electronic equipment, school furniture and other school equipment).

<u>Code of conduct for learners</u>:

The code of conduct for learners:

- must contain provisions of due process for safe-guarding the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings;

- must include provision for support measures or structures for counselling a learner involved in disciplinary proceedings.

<u>Random search and seizure and drug testing</u>:

The amendment makes it illegal to bring any dangerous object or illegal drug onto the school premises unless this is authorised by the principal and it provides guidelines for the random searching and drug-testing of learners. (A summary of the guidelines is given elsewhere).

<u>The functions and responsibilities of the principal of a public school</u>:

The amendment prescribes certain functions and duties for principals of public schools. These include the following:

- The stipulation that the principal represents the Head of Department in the governing body when acting in his capacity as principal;

- The requirement that the principal prepares and submits to the Head of Department an annual report in respect of the:

    - The academic performance of the school

    - The effective use of available resources

- The requirement that principals of schools identified as "underperforming" in terms of Section 58B of the act, annually, at the beginning of the year prepare a plan setting out how the academic performance of the school will be improved;

- The requirement that the principal performs certain specific duties including the professional management of the school, attending and participating in meetings of the SGB, assisting the SGB in the performance of their functions and providing the SGB with a report on the professional management of the school.

<u>Functions of SGBs</u>

In terms of this amendment SGBs are required to:

- adhere to any actions taken by the Head of Department to address the incapacity of principals or educators

- administer and control the school's property (including buildings, grounds and hostels) in a way that does not hamper the implementation of decisions taken by the MEC or Head of Department.

Appointment of auditors:

A technical amendment updating the definition of a person who may act as an auditor.

Identification of underperforming schools:

This amendment provides the legal framework necessary for the Head of Department to declare a school an "underperforming public school" and makes recommendations about the processes that must be followed and strategies implemented to bring about improvement.

Legal liability of schools:

This amendment confirms the liability of the state for any damage or loss caused as a result of any act or omission in connection with any school activity conducted by a public school.

Although all of these amendments have important implications for schools, the impact of certain of them is likely to have a specific and significant influence on the way in which principals and their SMTs relate to their SGBs and to their PEDs. While the DoE may well be able to justify these amendments based on the current realities in our education system, it may find that the consequence of these amendments provides a good example of the workings of chaos theory. Chaos theory (sometimes called the "butterfly effect) attempts to explain how small changes in one part of a system or process are able to produce large and unpredictable changes in other more distant parts of the system. It is important that principals and governing bodies do not simply ignore these amendments in the hope that they will go away and it will be 'business as usual'. If they do so, they may well find that they get caught up in the kind of unpredictable hurricane that chaos theory predicts. Rather, there is a need for them to sit down and discuss the implications of the amendments and to develop a way of working that ensures that the lines of communication remain clear and that they develop a good common understanding of their respective duties and responsibilities.

The following checklist and guidelines are provided to assist principals and governing bodies as they work to develop an operational approach which is compliant with these amendments.

Amendments checklist

Minimum Norms and Standards

<u>School physical infrastructure audit</u>

☐ The school has a list of all classrooms, laboratories, specialist teaching venues, libraries, change rooms and toilet blocks.

☐ For each venue listed there is a facility inventory which indicates the availability/non-availability of electricity/water/sanitation and of furniture such as desks, tables and chairs used by pupils and teachers

☐ The optimal and maximum capacity/class size for each venue has been determined

☐ The school keeps an inventory of all of its fixed assets and this is checked and updated regularly (at least annually)

☐ The optimal and maximum capacity (in terms of pupil numbers) of the school has been determined and these numbers can be justified in terms of the physical capacity of the school (number, size and adequacy of the teaching venues) and the curriculum choices offered

Code of Conduct for Learners
(An example of a code of conduct is provided on our website at www.ednews.co.za and can be downloaded)

☐ The school has a code of conduct

☐ Pupils and parents are issued with a copy of the code of conduct when the pupils is first enrolled at the school

☐ The code of conduct is explained to the pupils and they are given a chance to discuss its meanings and consequences on a regular basis (as an example, discussion of the code of conduct could form part of a Life Orientation lesson)

☐ The school code of conduct makes provision for due process and for safe-guarding the learner and any other party involved in a disciplinary hearing

☐ The code of conduct makes provision for the support of pupils involved in disciplinary proceedings, including opportunities for counselling

☐ The school is able to provide counselling and support for pupils involved in disciplinary procedures from its own resources (e.g. in the form of qualified counsellor employed by the school) or is in a position to refer pupils to suitable qualified counsellors.

Random search and seizure and drug testing

☐ Appropriate signs which are compliant with the Act warn those entering the school that the property is an Arms and Drug-free zone, and that those entering the school property may be subject to random searches are clearly posted at all entrances to the school's facilities.

☐ All staff have been provided with a copy of the guidelines for random searches of pupils and the

guidelines have been explained to them.

☐ Suitable staff members of both genders have been identified and trained to conduct a search of the property and person of a pupil or adult where there is a suspicion that they may have concealed drugs or weapons in their property or on their person.

☐ Suitable staff members of both genders have been identified and trained to obtain a urine sample from a pupil.

The functions and responsibilities of the principal of a public school

☐ The functions and responsibilities of the principal, as set out in the amendments, have been listed and a copy of the list has been issued to every member of the SGB.

☐ The functions and responsibilities listed have been discussed at a meeting of the SGB and agreement has been reached on what these duties are responsibilities entail, particularly those relating to the principal's functions and duties as member of the SGB.

☐ Agreement has been reached between the SGB and the principal on the content, nature and format of the report that he/she is required to provide the SGB on the professional management of the school. (Suggestions on what this report should include and its format are provided elsewhere in this newsletter. An example of a report of this kind will be posted on our website in the near future.)

Functions of the SGB

☐ Members of the SGB have been informed in writing by the principal that they are required to adhere to any actions taken by the Head of Department to address the incapacity of principals and educators where these exist, and to administer and control the school's property in a way that does not hamper the implementation of decisions taken by the MEC or Head of Department.

Principal's Reports

• Principal's Report to the Head of Department on the Academic Performance of the School

• Principal's Report to the Head of Department on the effective use of available resources;

• Principal's Report to the SGB on the professional management of the school

PEDs and/or district offices may provide templates for the reports that they require on the academic performance of the school and on the effective use of available resources. Alternatively they may be prescriptive about the kind of information that must be provided. Most of this information would also normally form part of the report that a principal would provide to the SGB on the professional management of the school. We will provide some guidelines in future issues on the kind of data and statistics schools should maintain and which may form part of the requirements for these reports. This information could also form part of the report on the professional management of the school that the principal is required to present to the SGB.

The ability of principal and the SMT to provide the kind of information that may be required is, in itself, an indication that they have a reasonable level of administrative and organisational competence. The data will also makes it possible for the principal and SGB to engage in constructive discussions about the professional management of the school and about appropriate improvement strategies.

Elsewhere in this edition there is a SGB checklist of the kinds of things that an SGB should require in a report on the Professional Management of the School which has been drawn up by Editor Alan Clarke, author of the *Handbook of School Management*, and Consulting Editor Clive Roos who is also consultant to the Governing Body Foundation, a foundation representing the Governing Bodies of some 500 schools nationally.

No Teacher Required

It was one morning during the school holidays that I arrived at the school gates of JA Calata High School in the township of Lingelihle just outside of Cradock. I was there as part of my monitoring duties for the NATED 550 project (see more about this on page 10). The school appeared to be deserted other than for the caretaker who was working in the school garden. Suddenly I became aware of the most beautiful choral singing – music that seemed out of place in this dusty township. Determined to find the source of the music which came from somewhere on the first floor, I set off towards that end of the building expecting to find a large choir under the baton of an experienced choir-master. To my surprise and delight, I found neither, just this motley crew of wonderfully talented and devoted pupils rehearsing on their own for a choir festival.

I had to ask myself, how can we as a nation waste such talent in the way that we do?

Policy
SGB Professional Management Checklist

What should the SGB require from the principal's report on the professional management of the school?

The recent Education Laws Amendment Act (Act 31 of 2007) requires principals to provide the SGB with a report on the Professional Management of the School. The act does not prescribe the frequency of these reports and one must assume that this could be negotiated. We would suggest that the reports be presented either half-yearly or, if the SGB feels that the school is functioning effectively, annually. If the SGB is dissatisfied with the operational effectiveness of the school or where there are specific areas of concern, it should require more frequent reporting - either on the entire operation of the school or on those areas which have been identified as being inadequate or problematic. What is important, however, is that a policy on the frequency of reporting be formally adopted and minuted by the SGB. What is to be reported and the format of the report should also be agreed upon and formally adopted and minuted. Consideration could be given to developing a template for the use of the principal. Formalising the process in this way will help prevent conflict and possible rancour when the principal presents these reports.

What is very important is that:

• The matters reported on are meaningful, relevant and valid indicators

• The reporting is presented in such a way that it can be clearly understood by members of the SGB. It does not help that the report is so technical that the SGB is not able to draw accurate conclusions about the functioning of the school.

The nature and content of the report.

In his book, *The Handbook of School Management*, Alan Clarke uses a model based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which lists 10 steps for a well-managed and happy school. This hierarchical model provides a useful framework for the kinds of questions that the principal's report should answer when it is presented to the SGB

Step One:	Create a safe school
Step Two:	Ensure good order
Step Three:	Ensure a clean and well-maintained school
Step Four:	Teachers teach
Step Five:	Good work is acknowledged
Step Six:	A range of extra-curricular activities is provided
Step Seven:	There are fun events for each grade and/or for the whole school
Step Eight:	Students are involved in decisions that affect them
Step Nine:	Parents are encouraged to become involved in the school
Step Ten:	Parents and pupils are kept informed.

The importance of the hierarchical arrangement is that the effectiveness or success of each step or stage depends on the extent to which the requirements of the phase below are effectively met. The good and fun parts of schooling represented by steps five to ten cannot be achieved if the fundamentals represented by steps one to four are not in place. The following checklist can be used by principals and the SGB to develop a reporting system which should provide information about the status and operational effectiveness of the school. It should also help to identify areas which need to be targeted for improvement.

School safety and security

Safety from external threats

• Is the boundary of the school intact and are there safety measures in place to ensure that access by outsiders (including parents, relatives and friends of pupils who do not attend the school) to the school premises is controlled?

• Have there been any instances of breaches of security since the last reporting period? These need to be listed.

• Are there systems in place to ensure that those who handle school money are protected against attack by outsiders?

• Are there systems and policies in place to ensure that those responsible for withdrawing, transporting and depositing school monies are protected from attack by outsiders?

• Have there been any external breaches of security relating to school monies?

Safety from internal threats

• Are there systems and policies in place for the safekeeping of school monies on the school premises and are these policies adhered to?

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- Have there been any internal breaches of security relating to school monies?

- Are there systems and policies in place to prevent the bullying and the sexual harassment of pupils?

- Have there been any incidents of bullying, racism or the sexual harassment of pupils since the last reporting period? Serious incidents should be listed

- Are there systems and policies in place to prevent the possession, use and abuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco products by pupils and by staff members while on the school premises or involved in formal school activities? All incidents need to be listed.

Accidents and serious injury

- Have there been any accidents or incidents within the jurisdiction of the school which have resulted in the injury to a person (pupil, staff member, parent or member of the public) and necessitated their treatment by a doctor or other health professional?

- Is there a system in place for dealing with emergencies (such as fire and bomb-threat) and medical emergencies?

Ensure good order

- Is the school's code of conduct enforced and is appropriate disciplinary action taken against those who transgress the code?

- Are there systems in place for dealing with pupils who are repeat offenders?

- Are there systems in place to monitor and manage pupil absence, truancy and tardiness (late-coming)? Statistics of pupil attendance, truancy and tardiness should be provided and monitored by the SGB where this is perceived to be a problem.

- Are there systems in place to monitor and manage staff (teaching and non-teaching) attendance and punctuality? Statistics should be provided where this is perceived to be a problem.

- Does the school have a carefully devised school calendar and year-plan listing all major school events for the year? Do extracurricular events cause minimum disruption of the school academic programme?

- Is the plan published at the start of the year? Are alterations to the programme permitted only if they can be justified on sound educational grounds?

Safe and Clean - *good evidence that this rural school in the Eastern Cape is both safe and clean*

- Is the academic programme disrupted only in cases of emergency?

The school is clean and well maintained

- Are there are systems in place to ensure that the school buildings are cleaned on a regular basis?

- Is provision made in this system to ensure that classrooms and other teaching venues are cleaned (swept and dusted) on a daily basis?

- Are toilets and ablution facilities cleaned at least daily (depending on use)?

- Is the entire school building thoroughly cleaned each quarter during the school holidays?

- Are there systems in place to ensure that grassed playing areas and sports fields are cut regularly?

- Is there a system in place to maintain the hard surfaces of playgrounds and sports facilities and to minimise their injury potential (tarred surfaces under climbing frames and swings are an example)?

- Is there a system in place to deal with litter and graffiti and the school is largely litter and graffiti free?

- Is there a system in place to deal with waste that is recyclable?

- Are there systems in place to monitor and control the use of electricity and water on the school site?

Teachers teach

- Is the academic day/academic programme protected so that it is not disrupted or reduced by non-academic activities such as cultural and sporting events, mass meetings of pupils and staff meetings?

- Are there systems in place to ensure that teachers are in their assigned venues (classrooms) during the course of the academic day and that they are teaching the required curriculum?

- Do subject/phase heads and/or senior members of staff monitor the teaching of the members of their subject/phase teams to ensure that they teach the assigned curriculum at an appropriate pace?

- Are teachers provided with the required resource materials that they need in order to be able to teach?

- Are all pupils issued with the textbooks and stationery that they require at the start of the academic year or in good time?

- Are there systems in place to ensure that pupils' work is monitored and assessed on a regular basis?

- Is all formal assessment in accordance with existing policy prescriptions?

- Are parents issued with academic reports at least 4 times each year and do these reports meet the minimum prescribed requirement for pupil reports set out in existing policy?

- Are parents offered opportunities to discuss their children's reports with teachers at a time which is convenient to them and within 2 weeks of the date on which the reports are issued?

- Are there strategies in place to assist and support teachers who are unable to meet their obligations?

- Have disciplinary procedures been instituted against teachers who are incompetent or who are unwilling to meet their teaching obligations?

- Does the school have systems in place to ensure that teachers are provided with opportunities for professional development so that they are able to meet the requirement of 80 hours of professional development each year?

Good work is acknowledged

- Is the good work and special achievements of pupils and staff members acknowledged in a variety of ways?

- Are awards, photographs and examples of the best work of pupils prominently displayed throughout the school?

- Do teachers post examples of the best work of their pupils prominently in their classrooms?

A range of extra-curricular activities is provided

- Does the school offers a range of sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities which take place outside of the formal academic day?

- Are the majority of these activities organised and managed by teachers and seen as part of their normal duties and responsibilities?

- Are there systems in place to monitor and report on pupil participation in these activities?

There are fun events for each grade and/or the whole school

- Is every grade and/or the whole school involved in at least one mass-participation event each year, designed to develop grade and school spirit? (Examples include interclass sporting and cultural activities, fund-raisers, big-walks, hikes, clean-ups etc.)

Students are involved in decisions that affect them

- Does the school have a functional RCL or equivalent body with elected representatives from the pupil body?

- Is the RCL or elected body given real decision-making power over certain issues which affect pupils?

- Are there opportunities for pupils to take leadership positions within the school (team captains, chairpersons of societies, RCL members, class representatives, prefects etc.) and leadership training is provided for these pupils?

Parents are involved in the school

- Are systems are in place to encourage parent involvement in a range of school activities (PTA, tuckshop, clothing exchange, gardening club, homework club etc.)?

- Do the principal and SMT encourage and support the work of these groups?

Parents and students are kept informed

- Does the school use a range of formats to ensure that parents and pupils are kept informed of school activities and events, and the special achievements of pupils and staff members? Examples include parent meetings, newsletters, web-pages, posters and SMSs.

Most improved schools award

The "top" performing schools in the 2007 Senior Certificate Examinations were presented with some significant awards including a subscription to *SM&L* for their principals

Earlier this year the DoE made a number of significant awards to high schools which were the "top" performers in the 2007 Senior Certificate Examinations. Awards of this kind will always be contentious, given the diversity and inequalities within our education system. This does not mean that they are either inappropriate or unjustified, provided that their purpose is made clear and that the criteria used to identify the schools are applied fairly. In fact, it could be argued that awards of this kind are an effective method of promoting the DoE's educational priorities and outcomes to its schools and stakeholders.

The awards were made to 45 high schools and prizes worth over R2 million were distributed. The awards were made in the following categories:

- Outstanding improvement in Home Language and English 2nd Language:

One school was identified for each of the official languages and in English 2nd Language. Additional criteria were that the school had improved numbers passing between 2006 and 2007, had a minimum of 50 pupils in Grade 12 writing the particular language at Higher Grade level and that they achieved an overall pass rate in the 2007 examinations of 70%.

- Consistent improvement:

These are schools which demonstrated sustained improvement in pupils' achievement in Grade 12 for the period 2005, 2006 and 2007. The most improved school in each province was selected. For the purposes of the award, "improvement" was defined an increase in the number of pupils passing Grade 12 and an increase in the number of pupils achieving an endorsement.

- Outstanding Achievement Award. This award went to the school with the highest increase in the number of passes and endorsement passes.

- Excellence in Mathematics:

This award went to the 10 schools with outstanding improvement and performance in Mathematics in 2007. Criteria included highest number of HG and SG Mathematics passes, and numbers of A, B and C symbols.

- Mathematics 100 Club

This went to the 14 schools in the country which achieved more than 100 Higher Grade Passes in Mathematics – the so-called "100 Club" (14 schools)

Minister Pandor reads *SM&L* from cover to cover

In her welcome address at the Most Improved Schools Award ceremony – 2007, Education Minister Naledi Pandor acknowledged that she was a regular reader of School Management & Leadership "an excellent, practical publication produced by two former successful principals of public schools". The Awards ceremony, which was attended by the Deputy President who presented the awards and to which the principals and governing bodies of the award-winning schools were invited, took place at the Sheraton Hotel, Pretoria on 14 March this year. Awards were presented to 45 schools for their achievements in the 2007 Senior Certificate examinations. The awards included cash and book awards for the winning schools and a year's subscription to *SM&L* for the principals of the winning schools. *SM&L* is proud to be associated with this event.

The Award-Winning Schools

Outstanding improvement in Home Language and English 2nd Language

English 1st Language: Hoërskool Vorentoe (Johannesburg, Gauteng – 82 more passes)

English 2nd Language: Mqhawe High School (Durban, KwaZulu Natal. 102 more passes)

Afrikaans: Schoonspruit Secondary School (Malmesbury, Western Cape – 64 more passes)

isiNdebele: Senzangakhona Secondary School (Kwamhlanga, KwaZulu Natal – 33 more passes)

isiXhosa: Dalindyebo Senior Secondary School (Mthatha, Eastern Cape – 81 more passes)

isiZulu: Umlazi Comtech School (Umlazi, KwaZulu Natal – 187 more passes)

Sepedi: Bokgoni Technical Secondary School (Atteridgeville, Gauteng – 83 more passes)

Sesotho: Clocolan High School (Clocolan, Free State – 63 more passes)

Setswana: President Mangope Technical High School (Rustenburg, North West – 102 more passes)

Siswati: Mambane Secondary School (Komatipoort, Mpumalanga – 99 more passes)

Tshivenda: Khwevha High School (Shayandima, Limpopo – 48 more passes)

Xitsonga: Jim Chavani High School (Malamulele, Limpopo – 43 more passes)

Consistent Improvement

Excelsior Secondary School (Mthata, Eastern Cape – 135 passes and 20 endorsements)

Teto High School (Welkom, Free State – 129 passes and 53 endorsements)

Hoërskool Monument (Krugersdorp, Gauteng – 242 passes and 150 endorsements)

Bizamali Secondary School (Nkandla, KwaZulu Natal – 357 passes and 120 endorsements).

Motsheudi Secondary School (Ga-Sekgopo, Limpopo – 226 passes and 34 endorsements)

Mambande Secondary School (Komatipoort, Mpumalanga – 191 passes and 40 endorsements)

Hoërskool Noord Kaap (Kimberley, Northern Cape – 175 passes and 95 endorsements)

Bafokeng Secondary School (Rustenburg, North West – 238 passes and 68 endorsements)

Malibu Secondary School (Blue Downs, Western Cape – 205 passes and 66 endorsements).

Most Outstanding Achiever Award

Makgetse High School in Gauteng was awarded the most outstanding achiever award.

Excellence in Mathematics

St John's College (Mthatha, Eastern Cape. 28 HG and 232 SG passes)

Pretoria High School for Girls (Arcadia, Gauteng. 138 HG and 79 SG passes)

Jeppe High School for Girls (Johannesburg, Gauteng. 66 HG and 68 SG passes)

Makgetse High School (Hammanskraal, Gauteng. 36 HG and 142 SG passes)

Kingsway High School (Amanzimtoti, KwaZulu Natal. 61 HG and 93 SG passes)

Pinetown Girls' High School (Pinetown, KwaZulu Natal. 60 HG and 74 SG passes)

Stanger Manor High School (Kwadukuza, KwaZulu Natal. 47 HG and 128 SG passes)

Raisethorpe High School (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal. 78 HG and 184 SG passes)

Mbilwi Secondary School (Sibasa, Limpopo. 117 HG and 142 SG passes)

South Peninsula High School (Cape Town, Western Cape. 58 HG and 56 SG passes)

Mathematics 100 Club

Hoërskool Waterkloof (Pretoria. Gauteng – 233 HG passes)

Pretoria Boys' High School (Pretoria, Gauteng – 165 HG passes)

Pretoria High School for Girls (Pretoria, Gauteng – 138 HG passes)

Hoërskool Garsfontein (Pretoria, Gauteng – 136 HG passes)

Hoërskool Eldoraigne (Centurion, Gauteng – 132 HG passes)

Mbilwi Secondary School (Sibasa, Limpopo – 117 HG passes)

Hoërskool Menlopark (Pretoria, Gauteng – 116 HG passes)

Afrikaans Hoër Seunsskool (Pretoria, Gauteng – 115 HG passes)

Paul Roos Gymnasium (Stellenbosch, Western Cape – 111 HG passes)

Parel Vallei High School (Somerset West, Western Cape – 110 HG passes)

Westville Boys' High School (Westville, KwaZulu Natal – 109 HG passes)

Westville Girls' High School (Westville, KwaZulu Natal – 109 HG passes)

Westerford High School (Rondebosch, Western Cape – 108 HG passes)

Diocesan College (Rondebosch, Western Cape – 105 HG passes)

News
Second chance for the 2007 SC failures

The NATED 550 project is a DoE (National) initiative to assist the 170 000 Senior Certificate candidates who failed in 2007

The NATED 550 project is a DoE (National) initiative to assist the nearly 170 000 Senior Certificate candidates who failed in 2007 and who, because of the introduction of the new national curriculum, would not have been able to re-write all or part of these examinations in 2008. To assist these unsuccessful candidates, the DoE will make it possible for them to re-write all or part of their examinations in May and June each year until 2011.

In addition to this, the DoE is providing these pupils with special tuition and support programmes. These programmes - which function at provincial and district level - include tuition by "expert" teachers and the provision of study guides, past examination papers and textbooks for pupils. The tuition that is offered varies from centre to centre but in most instances takes place on Saturdays and - in some centres - in the afternoons on weekdays and was scheduled to continue during part or all of the March/April school holidays.

One of the innovative ways in which the DoE (with assistance from the SABC, Sentech and the Telkom Foundation) sought to assist the provinces with the roll-out of this programme was through the provision of satellite dishes, decoders, TV sets and VCRs. The decoders were set to enable Learning Channel transmissions, with the installation of these systems targeted at remote and rural centres that would normally not be able to receive the Learning Channel. These centres were also provided with additional DVD players and DVD sets of recorded Learning Channel programmes.

The DoE needs to be commended on this innovative and constructive approach to what is a very significant problem. Only time will tell whether the efforts of those planning this intervention will bear fruit. Much will depend on the work that has been done on the ground by the district officials, teacher tutors and the candidates themselves.

What is already clear is that – as in the case of the Recovery Programme developed at the time of the industrial action during 2007 – much is learned about what actually goes on in the school system on a day-to-day basis when initiatives such as this one are implemented.

Hard at work
These matriculants and their teacher were hard at work preparing for their coming examinations at Victor Poto SSS outside Libode, Eastern Cape

Dutywa Resources Centre, Dutywa.
Learning Channel courtesy of DoE(N), Sentech and Telkom Foundation

Teachers at Nyathi SSS, Thornhill Village near Queenstown excitedly unpack the Learning Channel DVDs provided by the DoE(N). Interestingly one teacher was a native of Ghana and the other of Southern India.

Management
Making Meetings Work

Are the meeting you attend tedious an unproductive affairs where, as some wag remarked, you take minutes and spend hours? Use our guidelines to ensure that the meeting you attend or chair are more productive in terms of time and outcomes.

Most people in leadership positions in education, and in other sectors of the economy for that matter, spend a considerable period of their working life in meetings. Given that those in leadership positions within organisations should be the most knowledgeable, experienced and expert employees (and because of this often the most highly paid), one would expect that any business that is conducted at meetings they attend pertains to matters of great importance to the organisation. Sadly, this is seldom the case and in many instances, matters of little relevance or value to the organisation take up most time at meetings. It is this writer's experience that this is often particularly true of staff and parent meetings at schools and of meetings called by departmental officials.

Meetings do, however, serve a very important purpose and few organisations can function effectively without them. The trick, for organisational efficiency, is to ensure that every meeting called has a clear purpose and that the organisation, structure and processes of the meeting are conducted in such a way that the meeting achieves its purpose in the shortest possible time.

The following guidelines are designed to help those who must host, chair or attend meetings, to ensure that the meeting process is efficient and effective.

1 Decide on the purpose of the meeting.

Most meetings have one or more of the following functions:

- To make decisions
- To inform
- To solve problems
- To persuade
- To socialise

The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated when the notice of the meeting is sent out to those who are invited to or are required to attend.

2 Decide who should attend the meeting.

In some instances, such as meetings of the staff, SMT or SGB, this will be obvious. In other instances, decisions about who should attend may require careful thought. The decision may even require a meeting of its own; but beware of the potential consequences of this - meetings have the ugly habit of spawning other meetings.

3 Decide on an agenda.

Under normal circumstances, everyone invited to participate in the meeting should have the right to add items to the agenda - provided these are related to the

purpose of the meeting. When discussing matter of great importance or of great complexity, it is sometimes useful to limit the agenda to just a single item. As an example, a school governing body may decide to limit the discussion at one of its meetings to the school budget and the school fees for the following year.

Good meeting procedure requires that the name or initials of the proposer of each agenda item be placed next to the item.

It is good practice to distribute the agenda with the notice of meeting

4 Decide on the date and time of the meeting and inform participants by means of a notice of meeting:

For groups that meet on a regular basis, such as SGBs and SMTs, it is best to establish the most suitable time for these meetings at the start of the year or term and then to stick to these times. This helps make planning easier for all involved. For the same reason, it is also a good idea to fix the ending time or the duration of the meeting. Another equally important reason for fixing the ending times of meetings is that it helps participants focus on what needs to be achieved in the time available.

The notice of meeting should include the following information:

- The time, date and venue of the meeting

- A list of participants or representative organisations for meetings (where this is defined). This would obviously not be necessary for open parent meetings or staff meetings and other meetings of this nature.

- The purpose of the meeting and/or agenda

- An invitation to participants to add items to the agenda if the hosting group/chairperson is willing to permit this and the deadline for these additions. It is common practice to allow urgent additional agenda items to be added at the start of the meeting.

- Any information and/or documents that participants may need to consult or become familiar with in order to participate meaningfully in the meeting.

5 Meeting procedure

Every meeting should have a chairperson and a secretary. For most organisations or functioning groups, the persons responsible for these functions will be either elected office-bearers or their attendance will be determined by their positions within the organisation. As an example, one would expect the principal to chair meetings of the SMT and the subject head to chair subject meetings. In both of these cases, however, the function

of secretary may be allocated on a rotational basis. In the case of SGBs, the chairperson and secretary are elected on an annual basis by the members of SGB.

Function of the Chairperson

It is the duty of the chairperson to ensure that the meeting is conducted according to agreed procedure. This meeting procedure would normally be set out in the constitution of the body or agreement would be reached at the start of the meeting on the procedure that is to be followed. For internal groups within the school, it may not be necessary to have a formally agreed procedure. Alternatively, the school may choose to draft a common meeting procedure policy for all school-based meetings. The chairperson would also normally:

- prepare the agenda with the assistance of the secretary

- ensure that the meeting starts promptly at the stipulated time. (Avoid delaying the start of the meeting for latecomers – it is unfair to those who are punctual and encourages those who are late to continue with their bad habits.)

- ensure that all cell phones are turned off at the start of the meeting

- prioritise the agenda items, if necessary with the agreement of the participants and make sure that each item is dealt with appropriately and expeditiously. (This is where a good chairperson can make a difference. It is the chairperson's responsibility to ensure that speakers stick to the matter under discussion and do not get side-tracked by other related issues.)

- ensure that discussion is not dominated by one or two insistent members and that the same points are not made repeatedly. (The chairperson is within his/her rights to limit the number of times a person may speak on an issue if this helps the meeting deal with an item or reach a decision.)

- decide when the matter needs to be taken to a vote if the meeting procedure requires items to be voted on. (The chairperson should also ensure that all members who are eligible to vote on an issue are quite clear about the issue that is being voted on, as well as the possible consequences of the decision.)

- remind participants of the date and time of the next meeting if this has been set

- thank participants and close the meeting at the agreed ending time

Functions of the secretary

A meeting secretary is normally responsible for the following matters:

- preparation of the agenda (with the chairperson)

- ensuring that the meeting venue is available and is suitable for the meeting

- distributing the notice of meeting and agenda to the committee members or to parties who have been invited to the meeting

- writing and distributing the minutes

<u>Responsibilities of participants</u>

All participants involved in any meeting, with the exception perhaps of political meetings, have a responsibility to ensure that the meeting achieves its agreed purpose. This does not mean that debate should not be robust. It does, however, mean that every participant conduct him or herself in a way that is constructive and that any decisions that are made are made on the basis of the thoughtful input of all participants. Participants can assist in this by:

- being punctual

- actively participating in discussion

- arriving at the meeting fully prepared. (This includes checking the agenda and reading all documents and reports attached to the agenda before they arrive at the meeting.)

6 Prepare a Meeting Policy Document for the school

Most meetings conducted at schools involve groups of staff members and it is good school practice for the school to prepare a simple policy document and guidelines for meeting procedure. Such a document should include the following:

- When meetings may or may not be held

- Venues for meetings

- An annual and/or quarterly programme for giving the dates and times of all meetings which all or specified staff members are expected to attend

- The notice period (number of days in advance) for calling meetings. (This may vary, depending on who - or which groups - will be involved and whether or not the principal needs to be informed of the meeting and whether or not he/she should receive copies of the agenda in cases where he/she is not automatically expected to attend.)

- The format of the minutes that should be taken and whether or not copies of the minutes should be forwarded to the principal for information purposes. (In most cases, it is expedient for minutes simply to take the format of a record of any decisions that are taken, together with the names of those who are responsible for acting on those decisions.)

By modelling good meeting protocol in the meetings that they chair and by insisting that all meetings within the school operate according to school policy guidelines, principals and others in leadership positions can significantly improve the effective management of their schools. Equally important is the fact that good meeting procedure will save them and their staff considerable time - a much valued commodity for all involved in busy and successful schools.

Minister and Unions sign OSD Agreement

After nearly 9 months of intense deliberations, the Minister of Education and teacher unions SADTU and SAOU finally signed, on 3 April, a collective agreement, "Framework for the Establishment of an Occupation Specific Dispensation" (OSD) for educators in Public Education. The new OSD salary scales will be backdated to 1 January 2008.

An important feature of the OSD dispensation and one of the sticking points of the negotiations was the introduction of performance-based salary progression. The OSD introduces a salary progression of 3% every two years based on "satisfactory performance" and educators who perform at the level of "good" or "outstanding" will progress faster towards their maximum salary. These educators are eligible for an accelerated salary adjustment, every second year, of an additional 3% for "good performance" and 6% for "outstanding performance". The first payment for good and outstanding performance will be made in July 2011.

The OSD agreement also introduces the "Education Management Service" for school-based managers (Principals and Deputy-principals) and office-based educators and in future all Principals and Deputy-principals must have performance agreements.

SM&L believes that the OSD is a step in the right direction but that much will depend on the manner and rigour with which it is implemented. Our education system desperately needs a system that pays good teachers well and which is sufficiently attractive to draw school leavers and well qualified graduates to the profession. There is also a need to ensure that those who hold leadership positions within the system, whether school or office-based, are not only compensated for their additional responsibilities, but well-rewarded when they meet or exceed established performance criteria and institutional and systemic goals.

Research

Learner Retention in the School System

How successful is the SA School System at retaining pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 12 and why do pupils drop out of the system? A new national report provides some enlightening insights.

Background

Two national documents reporting on the relationship between pupils and the South African school system have appeared in recent months. One focuses on the extent to which the system retains pupils from Grade 1 through to Grade 12 while the other focuses on the incidence of and reasons for pupil absenteeism. Both of these aspects have been the subject of much anecdotal – and some alarmist - reporting for some time and the attempts to quantify the extent of their occurrence are to be welcomed. Although there are potential links between these two features of how pupils interact with formal schooling and the temptation to explore these links is powerful, for the purposes of this article they are summarised in the unrelated form in which they were commissioned and published. This is partly because of the significant differences in the numbers of pupils involved in the two reports.

Learner Retention

The committee to investigate the extent of retention and dropout in the South African schooling system was appointed by Minister Pandor in April 2007 and submitted its report to the Council of Education Ministers in the first quarter of 2008. Included in its terms of reference were the following directives of significance to most readers of SM&L:

To review relevant existing data, information and research on learner retention in South African schools

To investigate specifically the extent of retention and dropout, as well as the reasons for dropout amongst learners in Grades 9 to 12 by undertaking an empirical study in a representative sample of schools

To investigate empirically any anomalies in learner retention among Grade 1 learners in a purposive sample of schools

The committee worked from the premise that the school system should aim to retain pupils in the schools for as long as possible, given the legislative provisions for compulsory education and the making of post-compulsory schooling progressively available [and presumably because of the hopefully accumulative educational value that is derived]. In conducting its investigations, the committee made use of the following sources:

Education Management Information System data
Census information
Labour Force Surveys
General Household Survey

Among the main findings of the committee [as direct quotes from the committee's executive summary] in relation to the three directives listed above were:

There is a problem of learner retention, which is more pronounced after Grade 9. The dropout rate below Grade 9 is statistically insignificant, but increases sharply from Grades 10 to 12. However, the extent of the problem is nowhere near the levels that were cited by the South African Human Rights Commission report and the "Mail and Guardian", amongst others;

A proportion of learners starting Grade 9 are not in a position to finish secondary school, and the system does not provide sufficient alternatives. As a consequence, there is a high failure rate, repetition and dropout in Grades 10 – 12, which is a waste of many years of learning. Urgent attention should be given to providing suitable alternative FET programmes which include a focus on both content and modes of delivery.

There is no evidence of anomalies between Grade 1 and Grade 2 that point towards dropping out. In fact, as can be seen in the survival rates by grade, the flow between the two grades is just below a hundred percent. A problem that seems to plague Grade 1 is high repetition of the grade, a phenomenon which is not peculiar to South Africa.

However, retention is improving, as are levels of education attainment, with younger age groups having a better chance of progressing to secondary school grades than the older age groups.

South Africa compares favourably with other developing countries on progression rates, enrolment rates and levels of education attainment

The two tables on the adjacent page summarise the major trend.

Among the features associated with dropping-out identified by the committee [as direct quotes] were:

Grade repetition has been identified as the single most powerful predictor of dropping-out. Studies conducted internationally have revealed that learners who have repeated a grade in their schooling career are most likely to drop out of school. Learners become disillusioned and generally disengage from school activities. The fact that grade repeaters are taken through exactly the same material and content when repeating the grade, exacerbates the situation.

Group	Birth Dates	Age in 2007	% ultimately completing Grade 9
1	1970 - 1974	33 - 37	71.6
2	1975 - 1979	28 - 32	78.8
3	1980 - 1984	23 - 27	81.1
4	1985 - 1989	18 - 22	86.2
5	1990 - 1994	13 - 17	To soon to tell

Mean survival rate per 1 000 of those entering Grade 1 in 1984		
Grade	Mean Survival Rate/ 1 000	Dropout Rate %
1	984	0.2
2	982	0.4
3	979	0.7
4	972	1.2
5	960	1.7
6	944	2.8
7	917	4.8
8	873	7.0
9	811	11.5
10	717	16.1
11	602	24.2
12	456	

Grade repetition occurs most frequently in the first grade. Schools all over the world experience higher grade repetitions at the start of the school cycle than they do in subsequent years. The high rate of grade repetition in the first grade is attributable to inadequate school readiness programmes, serious problems with learners' learning abilities or significantly high enrolments which have not been accompanied by appropriate levels of provisioning.

Dropout is preceded by indicators of withdrawal or unsuccessful school experiences [academic or behavioural difficulties] which often begin in the primary school years. Preventive measures should be taken at the earliest manifestation of withdrawal indicators.

The risk of dropping-out is very high for learners who are older than the median age when they enter secondary education; independent of their achievement scores [therefore grade repetition needs to be minimised]. The

cycle of previous failure may either impact on these students or they may have more mature goals than their younger classmates, goals which are non-school related, such as obtaining an occupation, an income, raising a family, or goals that are more directed at autonomy.

Educational levels of parents related strongly to dropout and interacted with gender. Girls with highly educated parents have a lower risk of dropping out than boys with highly educated parents. The effect of educational level also differs for minority and non-minority groups.

In the light of the above, it is not surprising that the report recommends that interventions that are developed should focus on the post-compulsory school phase and that suitable alternative FET programmes to the current provisions should be investigated. Other recommendations include the following:

• Attention needs to be paid to early indicators of low self-esteem and of aggressive behaviour as these are closely linked to later school dropout.

• As grade repetition is generally ineffective as an intervention, regardless of when the repetition occurs, learners who do repeat should have access to

SM&L comment on retention report

The full report, which runs to 158 pages, is a very thorough piece of work and contains a wealth of statistical information of relevance to the attendance of school in South Africa. It also contains useful summaries of a great deal of international research relevant to the subject of the report. It will be available on the *SM&L* website.

Of particular interest to readers will be Chapter 6 of the report, which contains an analysis of the submissions received by the committee, as it includes a great deal of food for thought from a school management and leadership perspective.

While the existing report deals precisely with the data relating to learner retention, improvements in historical retention rates and the significant dropout that occurs at the end of Grade 9, there appears to be little examination of the qualitative aspects of the problem. For example, why are so many learners not equipped to complete the FET band? When the report refers to how favourably SA compares with other countries concerning levels of attainment, this is also merely a quantitative comment in relation to the number of years completed. *SM&L* believes that this report has to be read carefully in conjunction with the emerging – not so encouraging – reports on literacy and numeracy attainment in South African schools, the performance of learners in the Higher Education sector and so on.

special programmes that are not a mere repetition of the material and content covered in the first year in the grade.

- There is a need to improve access to early childhood development.
- Smaller class sizes, more personalised settings and individualised learning plans.
- Intensive staff development programmes aimed at improving skills to identify learners with difficulties.
- Use of a variety of instructional and assessment methods to benefit the largest possible number of learners.

This article is part of a two-part series prepared by consulting editor Clive Roos. The second part of the series will be published in the next edition of *SM&L* and focuses on the issue of pupil absenteeism.