

# School Management & Leadership

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for South African Schools

## In this Issue

NSC & HEE ..... 2  
How Higher Education Institutions and the DoE are working together to ensure pupils who pass the NSC with a HEE have the skills they need to succeed.

Literacy in Secondary Schools .... 4  
Strategies secondary schools can use to improve the competence of pupils whose mother tongue is not the LOLT

Into Higher Education ..... 5  
A publication by Higher Education South Africa which provides advice to teachers parents and prospective students on the requirements for study at Higher Education Institutions

Discipline ..... 6  
Strategies to manage and improve school discipline

Good Communication ..... 9  
How to use a weekly staff memo to keep staff informed and build commitment and teamwork

Save money on internet access 10  
What you must do to secure a 50% discount on your school's internet access?

Policy update ..... 12  
We comment on a number of problematic policy related issues

## SM&L

Is published 10 times per year by Eduskills (Reg No.2002/011573/07). It is editorially and financially independent and not affiliated to any organisation. It seeks to provide the leaders of South African schools with current and relevant information on issues of policy, leadership and management.

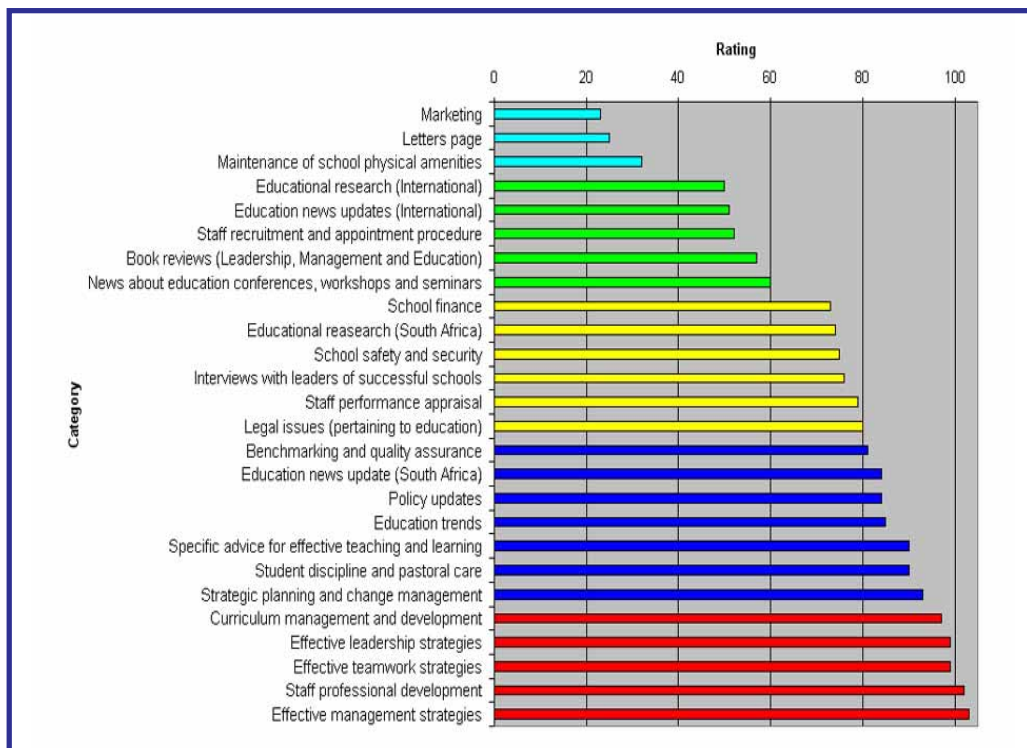
## Initial subscriber survey: Giving you what you want

The initial subscriber survey gives a clear indication of what you our readers want from *SM&L* and we will do out best to deliver that to you in this and future editions. We converted your responses to a summary rating to differentiate clearly between those things which you considered to be important and of interest and those which were of little interest or importance to you. The results of the survey are represented graphically below. It is clear from this that there are five areas on which we need to focus and which we need to provide for in the future if we are to deliver what you have asked for. They are:

- Effective management strategies
- Staff professional development
- Effective teamwork strategies
- Effective leadership strategies
- Curriculum management and development

This does not mean that we will ignore the other areas that we listed, because every category was identified by at least some of our readers.

Alan Clarke  
Managing Editor



At a meeting held recently at Herschel Girls' School, Penny Vinjevold (Deputy Director-General: FET), Hugh Amor (Registrar and Secretary of Convocation, UCT) and Nan Yeld (Dean: Centre for Higher Education Development, UCT and Principal Investigator of the National Benchmark Test project) addressed parents and invited principals on the NSC and tertiary admission requirement from 2009

One of the real positives to come out of the meeting was the extent to which there appears to be strong commitment on the part of UCT and South African universities generally to the new curriculum and the NSC. There seems to be a common assumption that the new curriculum is more demanding than the old and that the cognitive demands of NSC will be greater than the present Senior Certificate. A caution is that the correctness of this assumption will be tested only once the first NSC examinations have been written and marked. It was reassuring to be reminded that the new curriculum and the NSC examinations have and will be independently benchmarked and quality assured by a number of international examining bodies. In addition to the above, the National Benchmark Test which is being developed and validated by the universities, will be used in parallel with the NSC to test the extent to which the Higher Education Endorsement (HEE) stipulations of the NSC are valid determinants for admission to higher education and of future success in tertiary studies. High school principals need to be make sure that they are aware of the requirements for HEE so that they and their staff can provide appropriate advice to pupils on subject choice as they enter grade 10. These requirements as well as the requirements for a pass in the NSC are given elsewhere on this page.

Ms Vinjevold confirmed that the DoE is working to ensure that pass and endorsement rates in the 2008 NSC examinations will be similar to those in the previous few years. The approach that will be used to achieve this will include ensuring that the examination papers are of an appropriate standard as well as using statistical adjustments as in the past. The plan is, however, to adjust the standard upwards gradually over the following few years until the DoE is satisfied that the standard of the NSC is comparable to the best international benchmarks for this level of school-leaving certificate. She stressed, however, that schools will need to play their part if the quality of our schooling and the standard of our exit

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We were pleased to note that much of what Ms Vinjevold said supported the recommendations that we made in the articles *Preparing for the NSC* and *12 things high schools can do to improve Senior Certificate results* in the February edition of *SM&L*.

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examination is to be improved. We were pleased to note that much of what she said supported the recommendations that we made in the articles *Preparing for the NSC* and *12 things high schools can do to improve Senior Certificate results* in the February edition of *SM&L*.

Amongst the other interesting things to come out of the meeting were:

- Mathematics (not Mathematical Literacy) will remain a requirement at UCT, for all courses which currently have Mathematics as an admission requirement. For other courses Mathematical Literacy will be an acceptable option.
- The results of an applicant in Life Orientation may be used to distinguish between applicants with otherwise similar academic results.
- the introduction of the proposed Admission Points Score (APS) system as developed by the National Benchmark Tests Project (NBTP) as a screening mechanism at all Higher Education Institutes (HEI) to differentiate between students in terms of their ability to cope and to succeed at a tertiary level. More information on the National Benchmark tests is provided on page 11.

#### Timetable for Grade 11 National Examinations

The National Examinations for Grade 11s will take place from 5 – 27 November this year. All public schools are required to write at least the examinations for the official languages and for either Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy. The DoE does not require schools to write the other subjects although they are encouraged to do so. Decisions about the additional subjects will be made by the PEDs in consultation with schools. Although independent schools are encouraged to write the Grade 11 examinations they are not obliged to do so.

The dates and times (morning or afternoon) of the compulsory components are:

- 5 November (Afternoon) Mathematics/ Mathematical Literacy (Paper 1)
- 6 November (Morning) English
- 12 November (Morning) Afrikaans
- 12 November (Afternoon) Mathematics/ Mathematical Literacy (Paper 2)
- 15 November (Morning) African Languages

For the languages the paper will be a Language paper (i.e. not Literature or Setwork). It is interesting to note that on 12 November two papers are scheduled to be written, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

### Minimum requirements for a pass in the National Senior Certificate

The candidate must have offered and completed the internal and external assessment requirements for at least seven subjects selected according to the NCS prescriptions. The 7 subjects must include those listed below and the candidate must obtain the percentages shown with each subject.

40% for the official language at home language level

30% for the other required official language

30% for either Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy

40% for Life Orientation

for the remaining three subjects a candidate must get 40% in one of these subjects and 30% in the other two.

### Statutory Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Education

Minimum Requirements for admission to a Higher Certificate course:

a National Senior Certificate. (Institutional programme needs may, in addition, require appropriate combinations of recognised NSC subjects and levels of subject achievement)

Minimum requirements for admission to a Diploma course:

a National Senior Certificate with achievement ratings of 3 (40 – 49%) or better in four subjects selected from the “designated list”. (Institutional programme needs may, in addition, require appropriate combinations of recognised NSC subjects and levels of subject achievement)

Minimum requirements for admission to a Bachelor’s Degree course:

a National Senior Certificate with achievement ratings of 4 (50 – 59%) or better in four subjects chosen from the “designated list”. (Institutional programmes may, in addition, require appropriate combinations of recognised NSC subjects and levels of subject achievement.)

Continued from page 12

governance] both sides were joined by other organisations acting as friends of the court. The matter was heard in the Constitutional Court on 20 and 21 February and while there is no certainty as to the outcome, there appeared to be a general feeling that the original High Court decision could not be left as it is.

A decision is not expected for at least 3 months.

### SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICIES

The recent developments concerning the language policy at a High School in Mpumalanga are being followed

### Designated Subject List

Accounting

Agricultural Science

Business Studies

Dramatic Arts

Economics

Engineering and Graphic Design

Geography

History

Consumer Studies

Information Technology

Languages (one language of learning and teaching at a higher education institution and two other recognised language subjects)

Life Sciences

Mathematics

Mathematical Literacy

Music

Physical Sciences

Religion Studies

Visual Arts

*This information is extracted from the Schedule of Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor’s Degree Programs requiring a National Senior Certificate published in terms of Section 74 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997)*

very closely by, amongst others, various language groups, Education Departments and School Governing Bodies.

Originally the Education MEC in the Province moved to remove from the SGB its right to determine a language policy for the school as he argued that the school was using this to refuse entry for children for whom other accommodation was not available. In doing so he made use of Section 22 of the Act. This was overturned in an interim judgement.

However, the National Minister then approached the Pretoria High Court and a full bench ultimately set aside the interim judgement and ruled that the High School had to accept the learners whom the Mpumalanga Department wished to place. Leave to appeal was also refused. The school has indicated that it will be taking the matter further.

This is a complex issue and builds on the so-called Mikro case decided in the Cape High Court and upheld by the Supreme Court of Appeal. Here to an attempt was made to remove the language policy developed by the SGB and replace it with one from the WCED. The courts ruled that neither the WCED nor the MEC had the right to do this. If the language policy of the school was unreasonable then the MEC had to follow the provisions of the Act to remove this right from the SGB or have the language policy set aside by an appropriate court. The key here is whether the policy is or is not unreasonable.

# Literacy in Secondary Schools

## Strategies schools can use to improve the language competence of Additional Language Learners

In the February Issue of *SM&L* we stressed the importance in a solid foundation in the child's mother tongue during primary school years. Evidence from research is that competence in their mother tongue, and mother tongue instruction to the end of their Grade 6, is an important predictor of the academic success for bilingual pupils whose medium of instruction beyond grade 6 will not be their mother tongue. The reality is, however, that most bilingual pupils are not provided with adequate teaching in these areas in their primary school years and they arrive at high school inadequately prepared for the language demands of the curriculum. This is not a problem that is unique to South Africa and efforts are being made in many countries across the world to address this problem.

In the UK, Ofsted set aside funds to provide for the academic support of what they called English Additional Language (EAL) pupils and subsequently to undertake a survey to assess the nature and effectiveness of this support. A summary of some of the key findings and recommendations of this report is given below. This provides useful ideas for high schools on how best to support these pupils when they reach high school.

Improvement strategies were most effective where:

- schools recognise that bilingual pupils need continuing help even when they are fluent in the LOLT
- decisions about support strategies were taken at a whole school level and were focused on specific departments or areas of work
- the principal and senior staff stressed that support for bilingual pupils was the responsibility of all staff
- staff have access to advisors with specialist knowledge of teaching a second language and who are able to guide their practice
- these advisors are used to help staff gain confidence in teaching in a multilingual classroom.

In the South African context it may be worth using the expertise of the teachers who teach the first or second additional language in the school. Expertise in this area should be shared with staff who are not language teachers as well as with language teachers who teach the LOLT and who may have additional language learners in their classes. Consideration should also be given to encouraging members of staff to train as TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teachers so they better understand the approach needed for teaching through a second language.

As part of their survey the researchers spoke to the pupils of the schools and colleges they visited in order to

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Two things that pupils identified as being particularly problematic were poetic language and the language of examinations.

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identify what the pupils considered had worked. Two things that pupils identified as being particularly problematic were poetic language and the language of examinations. They considered the form of examination questions to be particularly intractable problem because of they found it difficult to identify what the question required of them. As a result they spent longer than their home language peers deliberating over the meaning of questions and because of this found greater difficulty in formulating appropriate answers. Other difficulties included vocabulary, verb forms and pronunciation. When considering what helped they identified a range of

### Factors which Additional Language Learners considered to be important aids to learning

- teachers who are approachable and who "believe in you"
- teachers who explain things clearly and simply and who don't talk too fast
- teachers who provided opportunities to talk things through to help understanding
- teachers who expect them to contribute in class because this forced them to formulate questions and answers
- a classroom atmosphere which allows them to feel comfortable about admitting that they need more explanation
- support with subject vocabulary, including writing of new words on the board
- writing frameworks to help them present their ideas
- visual aids
- dictionaries in their home language and the LOLT
- copying things down to check later at home
- books with audiotapes for practising the language at home
- marking that gives guidance on what has been done well and what needs to be improved
- models of what is expected
- support from a second language specialist
- support in their home language
- a "buddy" system in which they are partnered by a person whose home language is the LOLT



different factors, the most important of which are listed in the box below. It is worth noting that most pupils were opposed to being withdrawn from mainstream classes for additional language tuition and support.

Jana Echevarria<sup>1</sup>, writing in the February 2006 edition of *Principal Leadership* provides some further similar insights and his suggestions about what principals and schools can do include the following:

- principals and teachers need to understand the difficulties faced by pupils who are learning through a language other than their mother tongue;
- they must understand that the social fluency of pupils in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) of the school is not a good predictor of their competence in the language in academic settings, if the language is not their mother tongue. Research shows that conversational ability is acquired relatively quickly (normally taking from 1 to 3 years) but academic proficiency (the ability to read with comprehension, to analyse material and draw conclusions) which is what pupils need for success in school takes between five and nine years to develop completely.
- they must promote teaching strategies which help pupils learning through a second language including:
  - explicit vocabulary development which focuses on teaching words that pupils are not likely to encounter in everyday conversation but which are important for understanding subject content and which may have specific meanings within the context of specialist subjects;
  - the teaching of language functions and skills - those words and terms which form part of the teaching and learning process such as what it means to formulate a question or to scan a reading passage
  - the importance of whole-class teacher-led instruction which research shows benefits second language pupils because they are able to learn from the interaction between the teacher and individuals in the class particularly if the teacher explains new words and terms and uses them in a range of ways. Second language students also need to be encouraged to answer questions and to practise the use of newly acquired words and terms.

We hope that principals of high schools will find this information helpful in guiding good practice in their schools for teaching pupils for whom the LOLT is not their mother tongue.

#### References

<sup>1</sup>Jana Echevarria is a professor at the College of Education at California State University and co-author of *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model (2004)*, Allyn & Bacon  
*Principal Leadership* is a publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

## Into Higher Education

A new Higher Education publication for schools

*Into Higher Education: A guide for schools* is a publication of the National Information Service for Higher Education (NISHE) which is in turn a project of Higher Education South Africa (HESA).

The guide is an excellent resource for teachers and parents, and more especially for pupils as they plan for their last three years of schooling and beyond. It provides guidance on appropriate subject choice for those entering Grade 10 as it shows how various learning fields and subject combinations link to future careers and to study paths in higher education. Also included is information on all South African universities and the contact details of all of South Africa's FET Colleges.

The tables listing the minimum entry requirements for various post-school qualifications provide useful information for high school principals, Life Orientation and other teachers who need to assist pupils who plan to study further. There is also information on the proposed Admission Points Score (APS) system which Higher Education Institutions (HEI) plan to use to "summarise" pupil performance in the 2008 NSC examinations. Calculations using the APS will be used by HEI to determine minimum admission requirements for of tertiary institutions in 2009. How the APS will be used will differ from institution to institution – some may simply use the total of the pupils APS while others may double the APS for certain subjects before calculating the total. There may also be additional subject requirements for particular courses. As an example, for admission to a BSc course an institution may require a minimum APS total of 35 and an APS of 5 for Mathematics.

Admission Points Score (APS)		
NCS%	NSC Rating Code	APS
90 - 100	7	8
80 - 89	7	7
70 - 79	6	6
60 - 69	5	5
50 - 59	4	4
40 - 49	3	3
30 - 39	2	2
0 - 29	1	1

SM&L will continue to provide updates on a regular basis of strategies that both primary and high schools can use to improve literacy because it is such a key ingredient of academic success.

The paradoxical thing about good discipline and school safety is that they are most noticeable when they are absent. Without them, good education is not possible. In some schools good discipline and school safety are non-issues, pupils behave well, parents are supportive, there is a good work ethic and the community within which the school is situated is stable, supportive of the school and relatively crime free. Sadly, there are others where the opposite applies and where some or all of crime, gangsterism, drug abuse, poverty and other social ills are so pervasive and so entrenched that schools situated within these communities and offering perhaps the only legitimate means for their children to escape to a better life, are rendered dysfunctional. The spate of deaths last year of school children in fights, stabbings, shootings and bus accidents involving unsafe vehicles inspired a Zapiro cartoon that is a shocking indictment of our society and our education system. It is a problem that we not only cannot ignore but which every person and every element of government must take some responsibility for. For some schools the problem is so great that they are unable to deal with it without outside help and long-term support. The principals and teachers of these schools are so traumatised and demoralised by the level of ill-discipline and the abuse that they face on a daily basis that they have given up and either stay away claiming work-related stress and depression or if present, simply go through the motions. The majority of schools, however, are somewhere in between and for them, the important thing is to have policies and systems in place which will ensure that discipline is maintained to the extent that it provides an environment which is not only safe and secure for pupils and teachers but which is conducive to effective teaching and learning. For most schools the challenge is not the policies or procedures, it is in ensuring that these are applied consistently and appropriately across the school. Good discipline is a team effort and the school staff, like any team, will do best when their leaders set and maintain high standards, and lead by example.

Peggy Petrilli (see *Improving Literacy- how one school made a difference* on pp 8 of this issue) and her staff made improved discipline the foundation of their turnaround strategy. The basis of their strategy was a school-wide discipline programme developed by Educational Psychologist Randy Sprick. Like all effective discipline strategies, the approach promoted by Sprick in his "Safe and Civil Schools"<sup>1</sup> series consists of a number of levels and is based on some core underlying beliefs and processes. These include beliefs that:

- all pupils should be treated with dignity and respect

- pupils should be taught the skills and behaviours necessary for success
- motivation and responsibility should be encouraged through positive interactions and building relationships with pupils.
- pupil misbehaviour represents a teaching opportunity.

The processes he advocates include:

- self-reflection – teachers should reflect on what they can do to help students who behave irresponsibly
- using data – rather than labelling and stereotyping pupils. There is a need to work with objective descriptions of their behaviour
- structuring for success – organizing, designing and managing the setting (classroom, corridor, play area etc.) in a way that will promote appropriate behaviour from pupils
- collaboration – helping pupils to behave appropriately should be a shared responsibility for all school staff.

The procedures for managing discipline operate at three level:

- School-wide: Those procedures affecting all students in all settings
- Classroom: The procedures to be used by teachers in their own classrooms
- Individual: The procedures used to deal with the specific needs of individual pupils.

If large numbers of pupils are misbehaving across a range of school settings there is a need to look at the school-wide procedures and how these are implemented. If large numbers of pupils are misbehaving within classrooms, then the classroom procedures need to be modified and/or the level of compliance by class teachers in implementing them, monitored. Individual plans to help pupils who persistently misbehave should be tailored to their needs and developed as needed. If significant numbers of pupils require individual plans it is an indication that the problem lies elsewhere and the problem needs to be addressed at the classroom or school-wide level, with more time and effort devoted to ensuring that pupils and teachers meet their obligations in this regard.

Geoff Moss and John Bailey in a series of articles published in *Managing Schools Today*<sup>234</sup> recommend strategies that are very similar to those of Randy Sprick. One of the problem areas that they identify is the failure of teacher training institutions to provide adequate

training in “behaviour management” to trainee teachers. Teachers entering the profession are therefore ill-equipped to deal with the behaviour challenges of their classes. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that these

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few school provide any form of mentoring or training in behaviour management for their staff as part of the in-house professional development of their teachers

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new recruits are often timetabled in many schools with the most troublesome classes and that few school provide any form of mentoring or training in behaviour management for their staff as part of the in-house professional development of their teachers. They consider 10 hours of basic training in behaviour management followed by 10 hours of in-service training spread across the year to be the minimum needed for teachers to master the full range of basic skills that they propose. An important point that both make is that teachers need more than the mere understanding of the knowledge and skills they require to manage their classes. They also need to be given practical training in using the skills in order to develop the confidence and competence to use them in the classroom setting. The principal and senior members of staff have an important part to play in not only ensuring that time is set aside for training of this kind as part of the school professional development programme but also in modelling these skills when dealing with pupils and staff. Another important point

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pupils need to be taught how to behave

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these authors make is that pupils need to be taught how to behave i.e. the kind of behaviour that is expected of them in a variety of school contexts, and where they have difficulty in managing their own behaviour, they need to be taught a range of self-management skills to help them take responsibility for improving behaviour. Moss and Bailey suggest that the approach should be to use the same sort of coaching techniques that a teacher would use in teaching pupils to solve a mathematics problem or to catch a cricket ball. The skills need to be learned and established until they become internalised. When pupils reach this point they will become self-directed learners able to cope with a range of social and learning situations. The point that needs to be stressed is that it is not sufficient to tell pupils how to behave once and then to expect them to have learned the lesson for all time – we would be surprised if it worked for catching a cricket ball – there needs to be regular practice and feedback if the skill is to become embedded and routine.

In teaching these behaviours teachers need to

- Describe and if necessary enact the behaviour
- Explain the reason/need for the behaviour
- Go through the expected behaviour step by step
- Establish the cue for the routine (when I clap my hands...)

### Pupil behaviours that need to be embedded as routines

- entering the classroom or teaching venue
- paying attention to the teacher
- taking out equipment
- working independently
- working in a group
- tidying up
- answering a question
- settling at the start of a lesson
- going to an assigned place
- leaving the classroom
- greeting the teacher
- packing up at the end of a lesson

- Get pupils to carry it out
- Provide feedback on how well they did
- Practice the routine if necessary to ‘make a point’
  - Continue to coach the behaviour until it becomes routine

Principal and senior members of staff can help inexperienced and teachers who struggle with discipline by:

- explaining the importance of coaching good behaviour to them
- providing them with opportunities to observe good and experienced teachers modelling coaching behaviours in their own classes
  - observing these teachers as they practise coaching their pupils in specific behaviours, and providing them with feedback.
  - establishing behavioural norms for pupils outside of the classroom in the wider school context and modelling the coaching of these behaviours including:
    - how pupils enter and leave the school hall
    - how pupils behave during school assembly
    - how pupils behave when teachers/adults address them in informal settings
    - how pupils behave when within the school buildings

#### References

- 1 You can learn more about Randy Sprick’s *Safe and Civil Schools programmes* at [www.safeandcivilschools.com](http://www.safeandcivilschools.com).
- 2 Moss, G. & Bailey, J. The three Rs of behaviour management, *Managing Schools Today*, June/July 2006
- 3 Moss, G. & Bailey, J. Three steps to behaviour management, *Managing Schools Today*, September/December 2006.
- 4 Moss, G. & Bailey, J. Training and the art of behaviour management, *Managing Schools Today*, November/December 2006.

# Literacy success

How one primary school principal and her staff succeeded in improving the language skills of second language learners

Peggy Petrilli<sup>1</sup>, the principal of an elementary school in Lexington, Kentucky, describes in a piece published in the March/April 2005 edition of *Principal* the successful strategies and approaches that she and her staff employed to eliminate the reading gap between pupils from more affluent families whose mother tongue is English and the “minority students” - mostly children from black and Hispanic working class families with English as a second language. She describes her school as being an urban, ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged.

In May 1999, prior to the start of her drive to improve the reading of the students, only 15% of the students at the school could read at grade level. By 2004 89% of the students could read at grade level and more importantly the difference between the minority and majority students and between those who qualified for free or reduced cost lunches and those who did not, had largely been eliminated. The strategy adopted by Ms Petrilli and her staff involved two main prongs:

- improved discipline – this in response to her staff having identified discipline as the biggest deterrent to academic achievement at the school; and
- a focus on literacy.

## Discipline

Prior to Petrilli’s appointment the school had the highest suspension rate and the second-highest number of suspension-related incidents in the district. Shortly after her appointment she asked her staff members in one-on-one interviews to identify the biggest deterrent to the academic achievement of pupils at the school. “Discipline” or the lack of it was a common response from all staff members. In an effort to improve discipline the school adopted a model for school discipline developed by Randy Sprick, a national authority on classroom management. Sprick’s advocates a positive three-tier model of discipline. The three tiers are:

- school-wide discipline,
- classroom discipline
- individual discipline.

The strategy based on these three tiers included developing:

- school-wide guidelines for success,
- rules for effective listening in the classroom,
- behavioural procedures;
- and lessons to teach those procedures.

Two of the more successful disciplinary tools developed by the school as part of their ongoing commitment to improving school school-wide and classroom discipline, are an in-school suspension room and a Saturday School programme.

The in-school suspension room was a venue to which pupils who disrupted learning could be dispatched and where they were expected to make up every minute of lost classroom time. If they required more time to complete their assignments they would continue after school or attend Saturday School.

## Literacy

When Peggy Petrilli took over as head, the school was into its second year of “*Literacy First*”, a reading programme based on phonics and direct, explicit instruction. To accommodate the *Literacy First* programme the school increased the daily time allocated to language teaching (“Language Arts”) to two hours. This time was devoted to reading and writing every morning. In addition, based on extensive data showing that music and foreign language study can improve cognitive ability, the school developed strong programmes for music and foreign languages. Children in Grades R – 3 learn to play the violin and in Grades 4 and 5 learn to play the trumpet, clarinet, piano and percussion instruments. Fourth and fifth grade pupils can also take Latin and all students learn Spanish. The goal of teaching Spanish is to have all students leave school fluent in Spanish!

## References and helpful sources

<sup>1</sup>Petrilli, P (Peggy), Closing the Reading Gap. *Principal* March/April 2005.

Literacy First: [www.literacyfirst.co](http://www.literacyfirst.co) provides information of the approach used by Literacy First to help schools improve the literacy levels of their pupils.

[www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org) is the website of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

## SM&L says

Here is a good example of what a school can do if the principal and staff are determined to make a difference to the lives of the children that they teach. What is particularly commendable is that they did not simply focus on the teaching of literacy but looked at other things that they could do to reinforce and compliment the literacy instruction. We would like to hear from you if you or your school have used similar or other approaches to effective improvements in the literacy levels and/or general achievements of your pupils.



# Good Communication

A weekly Principal's memo to staff will not only keep staff informed but can also build teamwork and commitment

Although it is the practice of many school principals to start the day or week with a brief staff meeting prior to the start of the school day, meetings of this kind are not always best way of keeping staff informed and may in fact in many instances be counter-productive. The agendas are often too crowded to complete the listed items in the allocated time and so they either run-on into teaching time, or if there is a strict adherence to the scheduled stopping time, some items are omitted to the frustration of those who think them important. It can also happen that items are raised which turn out to be contentious resulting in staff leaving the meeting distracted and not focussed on the class they are about to teach. Another disadvantage is that staff members who arrive late or who for some reason are unable to be present miss out on whatever is transacted. It is not that these meetings have no value, but perhaps their purpose would be better served if they took place at another time. This does, however, require a well organised school and the principal and senior management team need to plan well for these meetings.

An alternative or complimentary practice is a weekly staff memo from the principal which is either posted at a specific place on the staffroom notice board or distributed to all members of staff via their pigeon hole or by e-mail. Whatever system is used must ensure that every member of staff receives the memo. The key to seeing that this happens is routine. Staff must expect that the memo will be posted on the staff notice board or arrive in their pigeon hole or mailbox by a specific time on a specific day of the week.

Richard Knuth, writing in the November 6 edition of *Principal Leadership*<sup>1</sup> recommends that memos of this kind include two kinds of communication. He calls these Level One and Level Two communication.

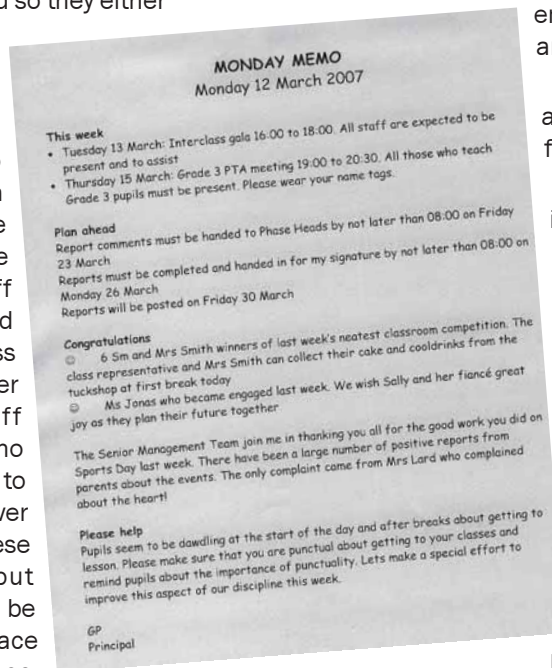
Level One communication is information about the daily events and routines as well as alterations to times and reminders about coming events. It is about the daily and weekly routine of the school. Providing this information in written form ensures that there can be no dispute about what is happening and what is required.

Level Two communication looks to promote the broader vision and aspirations of the school and about building the relationships within the school community. Level Two communication includes such things as:

- providing reminders about the goals of the school so that these become embedded in the thinking of the staff and school
  - celebrating special achievements and acknowledging failures
  - recognizing and rewarding individual achievements
  - fostering shared beliefs and a sense of accomplishment
  - acknowledging important personal events in the lives of staff such as birthdays and family events such as births and deaths

The important thing about Level Two communication is that it builds the sense of community which is necessary if institutions are to achieve their broader goals. It is the kind of communication that builds buy-in and commitment from staff and

for this reason is an important leadership tool for principals. It does, however, require a level of self-discipline if it is to achieve its purpose and principals who plan to introduce it need to set aside a fixed time every week to prepare and to write it. To be effective it needs to be brief and to the point, certainly not more than one typed A4 page. It should, in addition, always include some form of Level Two communication.



## References

Knuth, R. The Monday Memo, *Principal Leadership*, November 2006.

*Principal Leadership* is a publication of the USA-based, *National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)*



# Save Money with discounted internet access

Section 73 of the Electronic Communications Act (Act 36 of 2005) makes provision for public educational institutions to receive a 50% discount of charges levied for access to the Internet. The implementation date of this Act was 26 July 2006 and all public school are therefore entitled to this discount.

The discount applies to the following services:

- Schools with a dial-up/analog connection (including ISDN) to a registered Internet Service Provider (e.g. MWeb, Lando, etc.): Monthly Telkom Internet line rental plus the cost of calls made from the school to a registered Internet Service Provider. Note that ordinary telephone calls made on the line are NOT subject to the 50% discount.
- Schools with a dedicated/digital data line (e.g. ADSL, diginet): Monthly line rental (which in the case of ADSL includes the data transferred across the line). Leased equipment from the supplier (Telkom) is also subject to a 50% discount.
- Schools with a wireless connection (e.g. iBurst by WBS, MyWireless by Sentech): School receives a 50% discount on the ruling commercial rate for the service. Leased equipment from the supplier (e.g. the wireless modem) is also subject to a 50% discount.
- Schools linking to the Internet via one of the cellphone operators: School receives a 50% discount on the ruling commercial rate for the service. Example: If a cellphone company charges a school R399 for the 1G-package, school should pay R199, 50 for the same package. Leased equipment from the supplier (e.g. the cellphone card/router) is also subject to a 50% discount.

## How to apply

Schools connected to the Internet via a Telkom landline:

- Visit the Telkom website <http://www.telkom.co.za/common/erate/index.html>
- Print out and complete the application form.
- Fax completed application form to Telkom e-rate number: (012) 321 6463 or any Telkom regional fax number.
- Telkom officials dealing with e-rate implementation will process your form.

Schools connected to the Internet via other Internet service providers (ISP) e.g. iBurst, Sentech, MTN, Cell C, Vodacom etc. should contact their ISP for the 50% discount.

The Act is binding on all ISPs (there are no exclusions) and all should provide the 50% discount.

For further information or queries contact your provincial education department ICT contact person on the list below or Telkom on numbers (012) 311 6638 or (012) 311 7547.

PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CONTACTS		
Province	Name	Telephone Fax
Eastern Cape	Nygel Jones	040 6084200 040 6084305
Free State	Fred Wilkinson	051 4048414 051 404 8094
Gauteng	Tom Waspe	011 355 1507/1514 011 355 0734
	Paddy Padayachee	011 355 0123 011 355 0481
Kwazulu-Natal	Hintsa Mhlane	031 274 1267 031 205 7522
Limpopo	Bobby Raphahlelo	015 290 7671 015 297 8219
	Susan Erasmus	015 290 7627 015 297 8219
Mpumalanga	Queen Mashego	013 766 5063 013 766 5580/9
	Jerry Masilela	013 766 5063 013 766 7231
Northern Cape	Moss Mthembu	053 839 6625 053 839 6539
North-West	Philemon Kotsokoane	018389 8029 018 384 3316
	Emily Sebolai	018 389 8027 018 384 3316
Western Cape	Mike Chiles	021 467 2025 021 425 7482/65
	Kobus van Wyk	021 467 2224

## Reference

Information provided on the DoE website  
[http://www.thutong.org.za/resources/eRate\\_InfoforSchools.pdf](http://www.thutong.org.za/resources/eRate_InfoforSchools.pdf)

The National Benchmark Tests Project is a project of Higher Education South Africa. Its overall goal is to develop national tests in the broad domains of academic literacy/ language proficiency, quantitative literacy/ numeracy and mathematics in order to:

- 1 benchmark entry level proficiencies of students across institutional types
- 2 assess the relationship between entry level proficiencies and school-level exit outcomes
- 3 provide a service to HEIs requiring additional information for the admission and placement of students
- 4 Inform the nature of foundation courses/ extended curriculum programmes and curricular responsiveness.

Benchmark tests are defined as tests designed to assess performance with respect to learning outcomes (content standards) in a specific content domain (subject learning area) along a continuum on which the expected level of minimum proficiency (benchmarks/ performance standards) has been set for a specific purpose (e.g. entry to higher education). There are three tests:

- Academic literacy (verbal reasoning)
- Academic literacy (quantitative literacy) and
- Mathematics (cognitive academic mathematical proficiency)

### Academic literacy (verbal reasoning)

This relates to a student's capacity to engage successfully with the demands of academic study in the medium of instruction provided. As an example this would include the ability to:

- understand and use the structure and organization of discourse and argument
- see superordinate and subordinate ideas
- differentiate between statements and examples, facts and opinions, propositions and arguments
- classify, categorise and label
- draw conclusions and apply insights, either on the basis of what is stated in text or is implied by texts

### Academic literacy (quantitative literacy)

This refers to the ability to manage situations or solve problems in a real context, using quantitative (mathematical and statistical) information that may be presented verbally, graphically, in tabular or symbolic form. As examples this would include:

- familiarity with and understanding of the conventions for the representation and manipulation of numbers (fractions, ratios, percentages etc.) in

real contexts

- the ability to use these to solve problems
- the ability to perform simple analysis of data, and to produce and translate between different representations of data
- the ability to apply logical reasoning to information about real contexts;
- the ability to deal with and perform simple questions involving order (e.g. inequalities) and approximations.

### Mathematics (cognitive academic mathematical proficiency - CAMP)

This refers to the ability to make connections between mathematical concepts formally regarded as part of the secondary school curriculum and concrete everyday situations in which such ideas may be relevant. The CAMP test will assess the extent to which the new school curriculum has prepared students with both low-and high-level skills equip them to engage with abstract mathematical concepts and their real-life applications.

Based on the results of these tests HEI will be able to assign applicants into one of three broad bands

- Those who have demonstrated the necessary competence to enter regular degree study programme
- Those who have demonstrated that they have the competence to enter an academically supported degree study programme
- Those who need further preparatory study, for instance at an FET College. The table below gives the proposed (hypothetical) benchmark assessment standards for Degree study.

Degree Study	Benchmark test score (%)
Provided that they have met the FETC requirements stipulated by the institution/sector, students achieving at the level of INTERMEDIATE or higher would be deemed to be prepared for entry to regular degree study.	50 - 100
Provided that they have met the FETC requirements stipulated by the institution/sector, Students achieving at the BASIC level would be placed onto extended programmes or some other form of supported curriculum	35 - 49
Students achieving at the RUDIMENTARY level would be advised to take preparatory courses (for example at FE Colleges), provided that they have met the FETC requirements stipulated by the institution/sector.	0 - 34

## REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE EXEMPTION OF PARENTS FROM PAYMENT OF SCHOOL FEES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### RANDOM OBSERVATIONS

The amended Fee Exemption Regulations were published only on 18 October 2006 with an implementation date of 1 January 2007. Whatever has been said by various spokespersons for the State and even in a related High Court judgement, in terms of the practical considerations of a school budget cycle the publication was extremely late and has created significant pressures for many schools.

Only time will tell the extent of the actual financial difficulties created for schools by increased access to fee exemptions for parents in a climate of rising costs and increased competition for competent teachers. Vague promises of some form of compensation will not help School Governing Bodies meet their financial obligations on behalf of schools.

The Regulations as published create a number of contradictions and challenges of interpretation. The one that will perhaps present most challenges to SGBs and Principals is the provision in the formula for parents to attempt to claim for additional monetary contributions over and above the set school fee – the A factor in the formula. It is already clear that many parents see this as a way of boosting the amount they can claim in order to increase their eligibility for exemption.

In determining what should be allowed and what should not be allowed to be included in this A factor schools should look critically at the definitions of *school fees* in the Act and the definition of *the A factor* in the Fee Exemption Regulations.

*School fees* are defined as a contribution of a monetary nature whereas *the A factor* is defined as additional monetary contributions. It is very clear that actual money is involved.

SM&L believes that this would rule out parents claiming the equivalent of what they have paid for their children's school shirts, cricket bats, etc. In fact, the only amounts that qualify should be actual cash payments made to the school for *a learner's attendance of or participation in any programme of a public school*. Schools should consider allowing monetary amounts to qualify under the A factor only if the parent is able to produce a receipt from the school.

Another confusing aspect that arises from the Fee Exemption Regulations is the attempt in section 14 to force the SGB to consider forms of payment other than

cash. SM&L reminds readers that the Act makes no provision for such alternative payments. The original 2005 attempted to define school fees as being both of a monetary and non-monetary nature. This provision was removed after representations from many role-players.

### CONSTITUTIONAL COURT CASE CONCERNING THE WEARING OF A NOSE-STUD

Many readers will be aware of the on-going legal battle between a parent and a High School in Durban concerning the wearing by the daughter of a nose-stud as a cultural symbol.

This matter has been dealt with at various levels as follows:

- The Principal
- The School Governing Body
- The KZN MEC for Education
- The Equality Court
- The High Court

Originally the Equality Court decided in favour of the MEC and the school, but this decision was over-ruled by the High Court. The parties decided to approach the Constitutional Court partly because of the far-reaching implications of the wording of the High Court decision. This decision would have been applicable to all schools in South Africa yet was limited to the wearing of nose-studs by what it referred to as *Hindu/Indian learners*. In effect it limits in part the SGB right to determine the Code of Conduct of which a Dress Code is often an important element.

Because of the specialist matters involved [cultural vs religious rights/ aspects of school management and

[Continued on page 3](#)

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