

Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

In this Issue

Tackling the issue of literacy

Preparing for the new year 2

Your school year plan is a good place to start your preparation for the year ahead.

Literacy 4

Wordworks, a not-for-profit organisation has a model for literacy and language development that really works.

Literacy 7

The guiding principles behind the Wordworks programme, including valuable advice for principals and teachers.

Literacy 11

Lessons from the Wordworks programme for principals.

Governance 12

Governance, management and leadership - who has authority and who is responsible within the school hierarchy? We provide a summary in terms of law and policy.

Finance 15

Stationery and textbooks are a major expense for schools and parents. We examine ways in which savings can be made through good management of these vital resources.

We have devoted considerable space in this issue to the topic of literacy and language development of pupils in Grades R – 3 because of the acquisition of good language skills is so vital if children are to succeed at school. Much of the material is based on the work of Dr Shelley O'Carroll, a founder member of Wordworks - a not-for-profit organisation which aims to support the literacy and language development of children from disadvantaged communities. Shelley has provided some practical guidance on the things schools can do to improve the effectiveness of their language teaching, based on the success that she has achieved with her "Early Intervention – Volunteer Literacy Programme". It was this success that we reported on in the last issue of *SM&L* in our article on St James RC Primary School.

The development of literacy and language is one of the areas where our education system has been consistently failing the children of this country. This is borne out by the recent release of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 study that revealed that South African pupils cannot read at appropriate levels in Grades 4 and 5. South Africa performed the most poorly of the 44 participating countries in this study which seeks to benchmark literacy levels in different countries. We also showed the greatest divergence of literacy levels. Interestingly, the country that performed best was the Russian Federation.

In response to these results and in an effort to remedy the situation, Minister Pandor released a Media Statement on 30 November, in she announced that she would be gazetting a three-year "foundation for learning" strategy in terms of the National Education Policy Act that will involve the annual testing of all children from Grade 3. The statement also disclosed that a reading toolkit will be distributed to primary schools in January 2008. The toolkit will contain all the resources teachers need to teach reading in Grades R and 1, including an Early Grade Reading Assessment tool (EGRA) to assist teachers in monitoring the reading progress of their pupils. Teachers will also receive intensive training and the expert advice of curriculum advisors.

SM&L welcomes this initiative and plans to monitor and report on its roll-out. We would like to encourage our subscribers to keep us informed of their experience of it and the extent to which it is helping improve the literacy and language levels of their pupils.

SM&L

Oops! An embarrassing error

Those of our readers who are sharp-eyed may have noticed the unintended mistake that we made with the re-design of the *SM&L* masthead in Edition 8. We somehow to transpose the words "Management" and "Leadership" in our title so that it read "School Leadership & Management" instead of the correct "School Management & Leadership" and apologise to our readers for the error.



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Management

Preparing for the New Year: Your School year plan

Your school year plan is a good place to start your preparation for the year ahead

This is the time of year when principals and their leadership teams look to do their planning for the next school year and one part of this is putting together the year – the list of all the important events and functions that form part and parcel of the normal school year.

The final year plan can be quite an elaborate public document and more affluent schools often have these professionally printed on card in a format that folds easily to fit into a pocket or purse. These are then distributed to parents and staff so everyone is aware of the date, time and place of all of the important events of the year. Producing and publishing a document of this kind has a number of benefits: it is a good public relations exercise, creating the impression the school is well managed. It also ensures that everyone is aware of the date and time of events so there is little excuse for non-attendance by staff and pupils; and parents have the time they need to make the necessary arrangements to attend meetings and functions.

The downside of this kind of a document is that it is much more difficult to change the date or time of an event, should the need arise. Simple typographical and other similar errors when preparing the document for publication, if not picked up during the editing process, can create similar problems and can well undo all the good PR that may have accrued with the publication of an events calendar of this kind.

Another problem that can creep into such publications is what to leave out. In busy schools full of committed and enthusiastic teachers, parents and pupils this can be a problem as everyone is likely to feel that their function, meeting or event needs to be included and are likely to take umbrage if their pet event is omitted. Schools who do not publish an events calendar should therefore think very carefully about the process they will follow in determining what to include in such a publication, as well as the steps they will take to ensure that the final product is accurate.

It is not possible, however, even to consider publishing an events calendar if you have not first produced a carefully-considered plan of the school. There are a number of ways in which schools can approach this planning and there are also a variety of resources available to make the planning process easier. Virtually all diaries include a double-page spread (year planner) which shows all the days, weeks and months of the year. Public holidays are also normally marked on these. Most reputable stationers sell larger versions of these and it is also possible to purchase versions on white boards which can be cleaned and re-used each year. There are also electronic diaries

such as Microsoft Outlook which allow you to enter information about events and functions on your computer and then to view these in a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly format and to print hard copies of each of these views.

One of the simplest and most effective ways of starting the process is to use a hardcover A4 exercise book and to allocate one line for each day of the year, starting with 1 January. Use a double-page spread with morning events listed on the left-hand page and afternoon and evening events on the right-hand page. Start by marking in weekends, public holidays and school holidays. Then fill in the main events of the year – that is those events which must take precedence over all others because of their importance, because their dates and times are determined by factors outside of the control of the school (such as the dates of National Senior Certificate examinations), or because they need to be booked well in advance in order to secure venues or speakers (such as matric dances or the opening of new school facilities). It is also important at this point to fill in the dates of events which may have special religious significance for members of the school community. This is particularly important when dealing with minority groups who would feel marginalised or prejudiced if their religious rights are not recognised. There have been a number of challenges to school in this regard recently and schools would do well to approach parents or religious leaders within the community for advice.

This does not mean that schools have to accommodate every nuance of every faith that may be represented within the school community but it does mean that when schools make decisions about the dates and times of events, they do so with a good understanding of the possible implications of their decisions.

Once these main events have been entered on the calendar, there is a need to review their sequence and timing to ensure that it is the model that best meets the educational needs of the pupils. In particular, one should look out for the timing and duration of examinations relative to public holidays and school holidays to ensure that there is minimum interruption of the teaching programme and that there is sufficient time for teachers to complete the marking and administration that needs to be completed before and after examinations.

It is also a good idea to look at how you intend to use the first and last weeks of each term. Careful planning of these periods can ensure that they are times of intense instruction of new work rather than times used by pupils and teachers to “warm up and wind down”. A useful way to measure and monitor the extent of a school’s commitment to the teaching and learning process is to

calculate the number of days of the school year that are “complete” teaching days - days in which no time is lost to examinations, administrative, sporting, cultural or other purposes.

There is good evidence to show that pupils who attend schools that are most protective of their teaching time receive the equivalent of one term of additional teaching time each year relative to those who attend schools that are least protective of their teaching time. Over the course of a pupil’s school career this can represent a difference of more than two years of teaching between the best and worst schools. Use our checklist to see how your school fares.

Once the final framework has been agreed upon, it is important to make it available for all staff. This makes them aware of the overall plan for the school year and gives them an opportunity to raise issues which may be specific to their subject or phase or other area of responsibility - and which may not have been considered when the draft plan was prepared. Once any problems have been dealt with, it is important that this Calendar of main events be seen to be set in stone for the events listed. Once this has been done, staff can be invited to submit the times, dates and places of functions of events which they would like to see included in the school programme. They cannot, however, do this until the principal and SMT have made decisions about the teaching allocation of staff for the new year in terms of the subject(s), grade(s) and phase(s) that each teacher will teach and the duties and responsibilities which will be allocated to each member of staff.

This must therefore be done before staff are invited to submit information about the events and activities which they would like to have included in the Calendar of events.

The simplest way to collect this data from staff is to get them to complete some kind of event/function booking sheet which includes the following information:

- The title of the event or function
- The start and ending time, date, venue and duration
 - The teacher(s) with overall responsibility for its management
 - The grade/class/ group of pupils who will be involved
 - The number of pupils who will be involved
 - Any other information that may be needed, such as costs, transport and catering arrangements

These can then be sorted and collated and, where necessary, dates and times can be negotiated where there may be clashes and/or the repeated involvement of certain groups of pupils over a short period of time. Once these have been resolved, the “minor” events can also be entered on the school programme. The advantage of a system of this kind is that it forces teachers to plan ahead and to commit themselves to certain events. It also helps build a

sense of accountability and makes it possible for the principal or SMT to turn down requests to introduce additional functions and events proposed at a whim by those who are less well organised or fail to plan ahead, without seeming to be obstructionist or killjoys.

Preparing the school’s events Calendar for the year is an important element in the planning process. If done properly, it forces all members of staff to look ahead and to start the process of planning their own programme for the year, to think about their areas of interest and to commit themselves to specific events and functions.

Time-on-task checklist

Use this time-on-task checklist to measure and monitor your school’s commitment to the teaching and learning process.

It is probably best to complete this checklist of each grade as the number of days lost may differ from grade to grade.

For the purpose of this exercise a “complete” teaching day is one in which every lesson is taught and which is not shortened for any purpose; and an “incomplete” day is one in which at least one lesson curtailed or is dropped from the scheduled teaching programme for the day.

Days used for examinations are by definition “incomplete” days, as are full or part days used for fund-raising, sporting or cultural events.

Less than 20% is good; less than 10% is excellent

Reason for incomplete days	No. of days
Days set aside for examinations / assessment	
Incomplete days at the start of each term	
Incomplete days at the end of each term	
Incomplete days as a result of fund-raising events	
Incomplete days as a result of sporting events (include teams leaving early for tours)	
Incomplete days as a result of cultural events (choir festivals, school play etc.)	
Incomplete days as a result of staff meetings	
Incomplete days as a result of special events and celebrations (Valedictory, Priz-giving, etc.)	
Incomplete days as a result of other factors (strike action, visits by important dignitaries, etc.)	
Total incomplete days	
Total days in the school year (195/6 days in 2008)	
% of teaching time lost	

Literacy

Wordworks - improving language skills where they matter most

Wordworks, a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town, has developed a simple yet effective intervention strategy that is succeeding in providing children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in their early years of schooling, with the critical language skills that they need to succeed at school.

Wordworks is a non-profit organisation that aims to support the early literacy and language development of children from disadvantaged communities. Their approach goes beyond simply working directly with children and includes working with parents, teachers and community volunteers. Through this approach, the Wordworks team aims to create a support network which will encourage and assist children as they develop their language skills.

Although in this article we will focus on their “*Early Intervention – Volunteer Literacy programme*”, it is worth noting that Wordworks consists of four interrelated components:

- **Family literacy:** This is a home-school partnership programme, run by Brigid Comrie, which aims to help parents, guardians and/or family members to support children’s learning at home. Although the focus is on literacy and basic concept development, the programme also aims to build a sense of community in disadvantaged communities and to build the self-esteem of women living in extreme poverty by focusing on small, manageable tasks that will impact positively on children’s learning.
- **Teacher training for preschool teachers in disadvantaged communities:** This programme aims to build the capacity and develop the skills of preschool teachers in disadvantaged communities to make them aware of the importance of developing preschool children’s gross and fine motor skills, their literacy and language skills and their social skills and confidence. This programme is run by Cynthia Pelman.
- **‘Doing hope’ – the Hero Book Project:** This project, run by Ilse Appelt, aims to build a sense of community among children and important people in their lives. It looks particularly to develop their emotional literacy and sense of self as a way of improving their coping skills and their ability to deal with trauma.
- **Early intervention – Volunteer Literacy Programme:** This programme, run by Shelley O’Carroll, trains and supports volunteers who work with children to improve their literacy and language skills.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead, anthropologist and writer.

The Parent Programme, Hero Book project and the Volunteer Literacy programme formed elements of the strategy used by Greg Gordon at St James RC Primary in his efforts to improve the literacy levels of the pupils at his school. (*Schools Making a Difference*, published in issue 8 2007 of *SM&L*).

The Early Intervention – Volunteer Literacy Programme works at a number of levels to improve the literacy and language skills of the children that it works with. It targets children from Grades R to 3, with the aim of developing their basic word reading and spelling skills, as well as their ability to write meaningful texts and comprehend what they read. This is done using simple reading and

writing tasks as well as word and sound games. The emphasis is on providing children with the basic skills they need to make meaningful attempts to read and write, rather than to guess or learn by rote. It is this emphasis that is a key element of the work that Shelley and her volunteers do and where its value lies. To appreciate its importance, one needs to see it in the context of how reading

and writing are traditionally taught at many of the schools that fell under the old DET of the previous education dispensation. Pupils at these schools were taught to “read” a piece of text which was written on the blackboard. For most - if not all - of the pupils, this “reading” was no more than the recitation of sounds that they had learned by rote through repetition. Pupils not only did not understand what they had read but were likely to be unable to identify, pronounce or spell the words of the passage if these were placed in a different context. Sadly, there are still classrooms where teaching takes place in this way as the results of nationally and internationally benchmarked tests for literacy continue to show.

The model Shelley has developed is fairly simple in practice but is based on a sound theoretical basis of how language develops and should be taught. There is a focus on relevance and meaning. The basic framework of Shelley’s intervention strategy follows a simple pattern but includes some important teaching and learning principles:

- The volunteers are provided with training to ensure they understand what they are required to do and its purpose. The training includes an opportunity to observe Shelley modelling the teaching tasks and processes.



Dr Shelley O'Carroll training a new group of community volunteers at Vrygrond library. Most of the volunteers live in nearby Marina da Gama

- The volunteers work together in a single venue with Shelley providing a supervisory role. She is present the whole time and is able to provide support for the volunteers should they ask for it and can also intervene in instances where they or the pupils are struggling. This is important because there is a tendency for the volunteers, especially those that are less experienced and/or unsure of the exact purpose of what they are doing, to want to move ahead rather than allowing a child to grapple with a problem word or concept.

- Pupils work with the same volunteer and with the same partner for the entire course. This is important because it provides the basis of a meaningful relationship between the volunteer and her charges. There are hugs all round at the start of each session and again at the end. This creates the nurturing and supportive environment that the children need if they are to risk and to learn. To the



By working with the same pairs of children each week, volunteers build up a meaningful relationship with them

children there is risk when they attempt new and unfamiliar words and when they try to use familiar words in new ways, both of which are an essential element of meaningful learning.

- Every lesson follows a similar pattern and this gives it structure and makes it simpler for unqualified volunteers to provide meaningful support. The content and concepts, however, can be very different from lesson to lesson; and all lessons include a range of different activities, each of which is designed to stimulate the thinking of the children and their ability to use manipulate language and use words in new and meaningful ways.

- Each lesson starts with the children reading a piece from a new book. They then write a piece based on the text in the book. This is not a case of copying what is in the book. They are expected (and



Making learning fun is part of the Wordworks model. Here children and their tutor clap out the number of syllables in a sentence.

helped) to write a sentence - or sentences - using some of the new words that they have learnt from their reading. During this part of the exercise they will be provided with word-cards to help them with spelling or will be asked to identify words with similar letters or which have similar sounds to those which they have written.

This will be followed by word and sound games which include the new words and sounds that they have learned and reinforce the work that has been covered in previous sessions. The idea is to build the children's emergent literacy, basic word reading, decoding and spelling skills in a holistic and integrated manner. This is where a nurturing environment is so important because it is only in this kind of an environment that they will be willing to make mistakes as they make meaningful attempts to read or to spell, rather than guessing or learning by rote.

What is striking is how well non-mother tongue children perform in these tasks, particularly as almost certainly

most of them have deficiencies in their mother tongue as a consequence of their socio-economic background.



All the material used in the programme, other than the readers, has been developed by Shelley. It is simple and cost-effective to reproduce by photocopying and is hand-coloured by the volunteers

- Materials for the programmes are cost-effective and relevant to the South African context. They have a strong research base, but are simple, practical and fun!
- There is an emphasis on developing the skills of reasoning and critical thinking. Shelley and the team from Wordworks feel that these skills are not specific to any language but that they are vital if children are to grow intellectually and acquire the skills they will need to succeed at school and to become functionally literate, thinking adults.



The children are encouraged to write their own sentences using new words that they have come across in their reading, and to draw pictures to illustrate what they have written. This is an important part of the process of helping them understand how the new word is used.

in this regard. Under the leadership of Brigid Comrie they have developed a manual for the WCED on teaching English as a First Additional language which will be used by isiXhosa-speaking teachers in the Western Cape. Cynthia Pelman, another member of the team, is developing a manual and training programme to support teachers in developing the language of thinking and reasoning in the children they teach. Both projects are for use in the Foundation phase.



The joy of reading

The work of Shelley O'Carroll and the other members of the Wordworks team shows what can be done to provide children from disadvantaged backgrounds with the critical language skills that they will need if they are to succeed at school and become functionally literate and contributing adults. The work that they do is not difficult, it does not require teachers with advanced qualifications, nor does it require costly resources or specialist apparatus. What is needed are teachers/volunteers with a good understanding of what is required, with the patience and particular skills that are necessary to work with children of this age, but mostly with a real commitment to doing the best for the children that have been placed in their care. More than anything else, they need to understand the enormity of the responsibility that they carry. Where they succeed, they set these children on the road to hope and prosperity; where they fail, the road is one of hopelessness and poverty. Sadly, the current reality of our public education system is that it is here that we fail them, just when they are starting. Yet it need not be like that and it is not a matter of money or resources....

Literacy

The principles behind the Wordworks programme

Dr Shelley O'Carroll kindly provided SM&L with the following brief overview of the principles and approaches that form the foundation of the model she uses for literacy and language development in young children.

▷ Many children from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have the privilege of print-rich home environments. These children begin school with gaps that put them at risk for reading failure. Yet, with early intervention, these children are capable of learning to read and write successfully. Schools have a responsibility to put programmes in place to address the needs of these learners. Small group intervention is key - and need not be costly. Volunteer programmes have been shown to be very successful.

▷ Providing children with a good foundation is critical to later literacy development. It is never too early to start – learning to read does not begin in Grade One! There needs to be a clear programme of teaching that stimulates emergent literacy through the pre-school years. There also needs to be continuity between the Grade R and Grade One curriculum. Grade R teachers need to be empowered to play a role in promoting children's emergent literacy and identifying children who might be at risk for literacy difficulties.

▷ In order for children to be successful readers and writers, they need to develop an early understanding that our written language system is based on an 'alphabetic principle' i.e. sounds in spoken words are related to written letters and words. In order to understand this principle, children need to have letter-sound knowledge (i.e. knowing that the letter 'b' makes the /b/ sound and that this sound is the beginning sound in words such as 'ball', 'bird', 'bed'). Children also need to have an awareness of sound in words e.g. that words rhyme, that words begin with the same sound, that words are made up of individual sounds - the word bed has three sounds...../b/ /e/ /d/.

▷ Research has shown that these important foundations are critical for successful literacy development. If children do not begin learning to read and write with these foundations in place, they are likely to view reading and writing as a rote learning process, where each word is something that has to be 'learnt', rather than something that can be 'sounded out'. These are the children who will tell you that they can't write a word because 'my teacher hasn't taught me that one yet'. Children who begin school with good letter knowledge and awareness of sounds in words will soon develop the skill and confidence to read and write any word in their spoken language. Even if their early spelling and reading is not 100% accurate, their

attempts will usually be meaningful, and reading and writing will be a process that they own.

▷ Principals need to ensure that teachers in the Foundation phase build teaching of letter-sounds and awareness of sounds in words into the curriculum. All children will benefit from these activities, and teachers will soon be able to identify children who are having difficulty with these important foundation skills.

▷ Once children have an understanding of the 'alphabetic principle', and can use this to sound out words when reading, and 'invent' spellings when writing, we know that their 'reading system' is established ('invented spellings' are those that are phonetically meaningful, but not necessarily correct e.g. 'elefnt' for 'elephant'; 'butfill' for 'butterfly'). The next important step is for them to be given daily opportunities to develop and refine this system. The best way to do this is to read and write meaningful texts. Where resources are available, teachers usually provide children with many opportunities to read books in class and take books home to read with their parents. However, children are not always given the same opportunities to write meaningful texts. Writing is often limited to filling in words on worksheets, copying text off the board, or writing single sentences. There is also a great deal of emphasis on writing being neat and correct. Many teachers do not provide children with enough 'free writing' activities, where the emphasis is on expressing oneself through writing/writing creatively. As a result, children tend to limit their written output to words they can spell, and often have difficulty putting their own ideas down on paper. Provincial and national assessments at Grade Three level have shown that children's written language lags behind their reading levels. This will continue to be the case, until schools take seriously the idea that 'children learn to write by writing'. Principals need to take the lead, as teachers often feel that they will be criticised for allowing children to produce writing that is not 'correct'. Teachers need to be encouraged to prioritise time in the school day for emergent writing/ 'free writing'/ 'have-a-go' writing from the earliest grades. This does not mean that the correct spelling is not taught. There is a place for structured phonics teaching and spelling practice. However, this needs to be balanced with opportunities for children to take ownership of the writing process through their own meaningful attempts to represent sounds in spoken words.

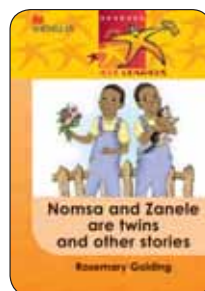
Continued on page 10



The **Readers are Leaders** graded reading scheme for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases enables teachers to help learners on their way to becoming independent readers. This reading scheme emphasises the importance of a balanced approach to literacy, as well as the value of understanding the role of stories.

The **Readers are Leaders** graded reading scheme:

- 🔥 stimulates cognitive growth
- 🔥 motivates learners to read
- 🔥 develops oral and narrative skills
- 🔥 includes **Phonics Workbooks** for Grades 1-3 and Intermediate Phase, **Teacher's Books** that cover Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6, 16 readers for each level, and core readers for Grades 1-3
- 🔥 is also available in Afrikaans, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu



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Macmillan Talking Stories is an innovative, computer-based learning experience that develops both reading skills and information and communication technology skills in learners from Grades 1–3. Each interactive story provides a complete learning experience for the learner, developing reading, listening and writing skills. Every Assessment Standard of every Learning Outcome for the Languages Learning Area is covered as the learners work through the levels at their own pace.

Macmillan Talking Stories use graphics which will arouse and maintain learners' interest. The easy-to-use learner instructions allow for effective interactive learner participation in lessons. Every story consists of the reading text, interactive activities, a printable worksheet and teacher's notes.

Macmillan Talking Stories are available in English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans as a single user licence or network licence.



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▷ Many children will learn to read and write in English as a second language. It is very important that we use every opportunity to reinforce the fact that their home language is important. Teachers need to make a point of asking children how to say things in their home language. Children get enormous pleasure out of being able to teach their teachers something. It is also good for children to see that they have something to offer – and that others might also have difficulty learning something that comes very easily to them.

▷ When teaching reading and writing, meaning is paramount. Teachers need to avoid tasks that children can master through copying and rote learning. We need to aim to develop learners that look for meaning in what they do – and expect to find it!

▷ Learning is always most effective if children are active participants. As a teacher, it is very important gradually to give children more and more responsibility for their learning. Wherever possible, reading and writing activities need to be carried out in small groups, so that children can initiate interaction, ask questions and participate actively.

It is often difficult to find books that are simple enough for early readers, yet interesting enough to make reading fun and engaging for young learners. The reading series listed below are particularly useful for teaching children in the first year of school. They are suitable for children learning to read in a second language, and are generally appropriate for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who have had limited exposure to books. They have texts that are simple yet interesting, and pictures that are engaging. The language is carefully controlled, while there is still an emphasis on meaning.

Below is a list with the name of each series and an example of one of its titles. Some of the books are written and published locally, while others are published in the UK, Australia or New Zealand.

PM Series

Title: *The way I go to school*

Publisher: Nelson Price

ISBN: 1-86955-627-5

Storyteller Series

Title: *Things I like*

Publisher: Shortland Publications

ISBN: 0-7901-2870-5

WINGS Series

Title: *I see*

Publisher: Era Publications

ISBN: 1-86374-686-2

KITES Series

Title: *I can do it!*

Publisher: Afribooks

ISBN: 0 7327 3451 7

Schools that work

In June 2007, the Minister of Education established a committee to conduct research into (high) schools that performed well and are in the middle quintiles. Called "Schools that Work", the qualitative study considered the circumstances under which schools achieve good results while others in similar circumstances do not. The committee has now released its report which is available from the DoE website www.education.gov.za.

The committee found four essential dynamics at work in successful schools:

- all schools were focused on their central tasks of teaching, learning, and management with a sense of responsibility, purpose and commitment;
- all of the schools carried out their tasks with competence and confidence;
- all had organisational cultures or mindsets that supported a work ethic, expected achievement, and acknowledged success;
- all had strong internal accountability systems in place, which enabled them to meet the demands of external accountability, particularly in terms of Senior Certificate achievement.

SM&L will bring you more about this report and the findings of the committee in future editions.

Ginn Lighthouse

Title: *When I grow up*

Publisher: Ginn & Co

ISBN: 0-602-30039-8

Reading in my world Series

Title: *I can! Can you?*

Publisher: Juta & Co

ISBN: 0-7021-4244-1

Kagiso Readers

Title: *Come here*

Publisher: MML

ISBN: 9780798671286

Literacy

Lessons from the Wordworks programme for principals

Wordworks' interventions in schools and communities have shown that it is possible to make a difference and to improve the language and literacy levels of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, even if you are working through the medium of a second language.

A general principle for these interventions is "earlier is better" – that is, the earlier in the child's education the intervention takes place, the better chance there is that it will have long-term benefits for the child.

Below is a list of some suggestions for steps principals can take as part of a language and literacy improvement strategy:

- If your school offers Grade R, make sure that the Grade R teacher is adequately trained to teach language and literacy at this level and that language and literacy are taught on a daily basis, using appropriate material and techniques.
 - If your school admits pupils from pre-primary schools, check whether their teachers have the necessary skills and resources to provide appropriate language and literacy instruction and that this teaching is takes place on a daily basis.
 - Create opportunities for the teachers at your school and the pre-primary schools that serve your community to get together to discuss language and literacy teaching strategies at this level. Alternatively, invite specialists from your district education office or from organisations such as Wordworks to run workshops on the teaching of language and literacy for your teachers and teachers from other primary and pre-primary schools in your area.
 - Insist that teachers in Grades R – 3 are able to make an early identification of pupils who are falling behind in terms of the language and literacy development and that they provide them with additional tuition and support.
 - Encourage parents of children in Grade R, particularly those who come from disadvantaged communities or whose home language is not the LOLT of the school, with advice on what they can do to assist their children to develop their language and literacy skills. If necessary, run workshops for parents on the strategies that they can employ and provide them with the resources that they may need. These could include making classrooms or the school library available to them in the afternoons so that they have a place where they can supervise their children's homework and listen to them read.
- Insist that every teacher sets aside adequate time each day for language teaching and that this teaching involves all the elements necessary for language and literacy development.
 - Provide teachers with adequate resources and ensure that these are appropriately used and cared for. These should include sufficient age-appropriate readers in every classroom, as well as stationery, writing and drawing materials which teachers and pupils can use.
 - Monitor and benchmark the language and literacy levels of all pupils in every grade and review the performance of all pupils on a quarterly basis.
 - Celebrate any improvements in language and literacy levels and reward pupils and teachers who perform well and who achieve significant improvement. Focus particularly on pupils who are weak and on teachers who work with those who are struggling to achieve.
 - Set a personal example by talking about what you read and about the value of reading and writing.
 - Use posters and displays in classrooms and corridors to promote reading, language and literacy within the school.
 - Make the teaching of language and literacy a regular item on the agenda of SMT meetings, staff meetings and the focus of staff professional development.
 - Stay abreast of the latest developments in language and literacy teaching through contact with specialist service providers and NGOs such as Wordworks and RASA (the Reading Association of South Africa), the use of the internet and other resources such as educational journals including **SM&L**.



Governance

The Governance, Leadership and Management of Schools – who is responsible for what?

In an ideal world, one would expect the governors, principal and officials from the PED to work together in a positive and constructive manner focused on meeting the best needs of the pupils of the school. This, however, is not always the case and although in most schools the relationships between these three groups is cordial and constructive most of the time, there are other times when the relationship can become so strained that the school may almost become dysfunctional. There can be any number of causes of these strained relationships; some are trivial and are easily dealt with while others may be more fundamental and more difficult to resolve. One of the most common causes of problems of this kind is confusion and lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities.

The state will claim that a major part of the most recent amendments to the South African Schools' Act is aimed

at clarifying this confusion – particularly concerning the role of the Principal in relation to the school Governing Body, of which the Principal has always been an ex officio member.

Who is responsible for discipline in the school, or for managing the schools finances or for deciding how long the school day should be or for the academic performance of pupils?

These are topics which are of concern to most principals and governing body members but being concerned is not the same as having the authority to make decisions or to pronounce on them. In an effort to assist our readers in charting a path through this minefield, we have prepared the following table which we hope you will find helpful.

Administration

Area of responsibility	Primary authority	Delegate authority
Control, maintenance and safekeeping of pupil records	Principal	
Control, maintenance and safekeeping of staff records	Principal	
Control, maintenance and safekeeping of financial records	SGB	SGB Treasurer
Control, maintenance and safekeeping of Governing Body records	SGB	SGB Secretary
Maintenance of buildings and grounds	SGB in section 21 schools. PED in others	SGB Committee
Maintenance of plant and equipment	SGB in section 21 schools. PED in others	

Curriculum

Area of responsibility	Primary authority	Delegated authority
Assessment and examination policy	Minister - Policy	
Homework policy	Principal	
Passing (promotion) requirements	Minister - Policy	
Subject choice	SGB in terms of PED policy	
Timetable and allocation of teaching load	Principal and SMT	

Finance

Area of responsibility	Primary authority	Delegated authority
Budget	SGB	Finance committee
Budget approval process	SGB	SGB Treasurer
Fees remission criteria	Minister by regulation	Appeal to Head of Department (DG)
Fees remission: Processing of applications	SGB	Finance committee
Monitoring of Income and Expenditure	SGB	SGB Treasurer
Maintenance of financial records	SGB	SGB Treasurer
Auditing of financial records	SGB	SGB Treasurer
Inventory and stock control	SGB	Principal and staff

Pupils

Area of responsibility	Primary authority	Delegated authority
Admission policy	SGB	Administered by principal
Admission procedure	Minister by National Policy	Administered by principal
Attendance policy	Minister by National Policy	MEC
Absentee policy	Principal and staff	Staff
Co-curricular policy	SGB in section 21 schools	Principal
Code of conduct, school rules and discipline policy	SGB for code within guidelines of Minister	Principal and staff
Drugs policy	SGB within National policy	Principal and staff
HIV/Aids policy	SGB within National Policy	MEC/SGB/Principal
RCL elections	MEC by regulation	Principal
RCL duties and responsibilities	MEC by regulation	Principal
Language policy	SGB within minister's national norms	Principal
School uniform policy and dress code	SGB (as part of code of conduct) within guidelines of Minister	Principal and staff
Serious misconduct procedure	MEC by regulation	SGB
Serious misconduct: suspension	SGB	Disciplinary Committee of SGB
Serious misconduct: expulsion	Head of Department with appeal to MEC	Advisory committee to provincial HoD.

Staff

Area of responsibility	Primary authority	Delegated authority
Conditions of service: State-employed staff	Minister in terms of Employment of Educators Act	
Conditions of service: School-employed staff	SGB	Possibly HR Committee of SGB
HIV/ Aids policy	Minister	
Non-educator appointment: State employed	Head of Education as employer	Official of PED
Non-educator appointment: School employed	SGB	Possibly HR Committee of SGB
Staff absentee policy	Head of Education /SGB as employer and principal	
Staff code of conduct	Principal	
Staff dress code	Principal	
Teacher nomination: State employed	SGB	
Teacher nomination: School employed	SGB	Possibly HR Committee of SGB
Teacher appointment: State employed	Head of Education as employer	Official of PED
Teacher appointment: School employed	SGB	Possibly HR Committee of SGB

Safety

Area of responsibility	Primary authority	Delegated authority
School safety policy	Minister	Head of Department/ Principal
School safety committee	Minister	Head of Department/ Principal
Compliance with Occupational Health and Safety Act	Head of Department/SGB (employer)	Principal
First aid policy	SGB	Principal
Pupils' transport and use and safety of school vehicles	SGB	SGB Committee if applicable

Finance

Reducing the cost of school textbooks

There are good savings to be made if schools are rigorous in the way that they control the issuing and use of stationery and the distribution, care and retrieval of textbooks.

School textbooks and stationery are two of the major costs of schooling and although in some schools, both public and independent, the cost of textbooks and stationery is not included in the fees, these costs remain substantial and are carried by parents and the tax-paying public. It is possible to make substantial savings on the costs of textbooks and stationery with careful planning and good management. These are savings that will be to the benefit of the school, parents and the tax-paying public but for our poorest schools, the more efficient use of textbooks and stationery will ensure that more pupils have access to these vital resources.

Stationery

Savings on stationery can be made by insisting that teachers, in their planning for the year, are very specific about the quantity and type of stationery that each pupil requires for their respective subjects or learning areas. They need to justify their subject/ phase requirements by providing specific details of how the stationery that they prescribe for each pupil will be used. One way to monitor the extent to which the stationery needs of pupils are efficiently met is to check, at the end of each year, the extent to which pupils have made full use of their allocation. It need not be done for all pupils: a random sample of 10 – 20% of each grade or class will provide a good indication of the quantity of stationery that pupils have used. Check whether they have had to purchase or be issued with additional stationery during the course of the year, as well as whether they have made full use of their stationery allocation. It may well be that certain students or students from certain subject may have made very little use of the stationery allocated to them or that they were required to purchase at the start of the year. This can easily be checked by looking at the number of unused pages in their exercise books. Schools should make every effort to harvest blank pages and partially-used exercise books. If the school does not want these

for its own use, there are many less well-off schools and training organisations which can make good use of them. Saving paper in this way is not only good financial and socio-economic sense, it is also good environmental sense as paper production degrades the natural environment, creates high levels of chemical pollution and uses significant quantities of water.

Textbooks

The cost of textbooks is even more prohibitive and it is here that good savings can be made if schools and their parent community are committed to the control and proper care of textbooks. With good care and proper control, a school textbook should have a useful life of at least four years but for this to happen two things must be in place:

- A system to ensure that textbooks are properly cared for by pupils
- A system to ensure that textbooks issued to pupils at the start of the year are collected, checked and re-issued to pupils entering that grade at the start of the new year.

In his book, *The Handbook of School Management*¹, Alan Clarke provides the following example of the kind of savings that can be made if books these systems are successfully implemented:

The model assumes that the school provides each pupil with 8 textbooks and that these cost on average R70 each: a total cost of R560 per pupil per year if every pupil is provided with 8 new textbooks every year.

If every book is collected and is in sufficiently good condition to be re-issued the following year, the cost per

Continued on page 16

Analysis of the cost of textbooks: Retention system					
From <i>The Handbook of School Management</i> p328. Used and adapted with permission.					
Year	2007	2008	2009	210	211
Total cost 8 new books @ R70 per book	R560				
Years of use	1	2	3	4	5
Cost per student	R560	R280	R187	R140	R112
Total cost to school	R490 000	R245 000	R163 333	R122 500	R98 000
Loss/ gain to school if books used for less/more than 4 years	- R367 500	-R122 500	- R40 833	R0	R24 500

“If you are involved in the management of education in any way ... then this book is a vital tool that you will refer to again and again. Clarke gets an A+ for his book.” Brian Joss

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- relevant South African case studies and examples on how to make a difference to poorly performing schools, textbook retention, and how to deal with issues of safety and security
- commonsensical, practical advice and suggestions on how to handle problem areas, such as fee remissions and fee collection, based on the author's hard-earned personal experience as head of two schools in widely different socio-economic areas
- concise explanations of the South African legislation affecting schools, and the differing roles of the principal and the governing body

A CD of the policies and other documents is also available.

Kate McCallum

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Continued from page 15

pupil drops to R280. Spreading the cost over 3 years reduces it to R187, over 4 years to R140 and over 5 years

• When pupils are issued with textbooks at the start of the year, the issuing class or subject teacher must prepare a master list of the pupils in the class, the textbooks issued and the unique reference number of each book.

- If the school has a problem recovering textbooks that have been issued to pupils, systems should be put in place to check on a weekly basis that every pupil is still in possession of the textbooks issued to him or her.
- Pupils who are irresponsible in the care of textbooks should not be issued with textbooks. Instead they should be required to stay after school if they need a textbook to complete homework assignments or study for tests and examinations.
- The collection of textbooks at the end of the year needs to be rigorous and steps need to be taken

Reference

¹ Clarke, A. *The Handbooks of School Management*. Kate McCallum, Cape Town (2007)

against pupils who fail to return books. This could include withholding reports until parents have come to school to discuss the matter with the school.

School textbooks are an important and valuable school asset and their proper care and retention should be seen as an important element of the school's financial controls and as a measure of the quality of its management.

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