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Supporting best practices to improve teaching and learning outcomes in challenging, under-resourced and disadvantaged contexts.

## **The School Development and Support Project**

### **High Schools Report: 2008 – 2011**

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**May 2012**

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**Maskew Miller Longman** for funding the School Development and Support Project and through this, providing:

- LTSMs for every teacher and learner in every subject in every Grade
- Supplementary materials for every class
- A computer and printer for every school
- Supplementary product demonstrations and training in how to use the LTSMs

**Pearson Education South Africa** for providing Grade 12 X Kits for three of the High Schools for:

- English
- Mathematics
- Math Literacy
- Accounting

**Pearson Education Achievement Solutions** for:

- Piloting a Grade 12 Mathematics diagnostic assessment in one of the project's High Schools
- Providing the Foundation with the diagnostic results for that school included in this report
- Developing the Foundation's piloted version of the School Development and Support Model for possible use by Provinces and their Districts

## Executive Summary

The Foundation's numerous previous reports demonstrate that in Primary Schools basic functionality and learner results can be dramatically improved within three years<sup>1</sup>.

This report has provided evidence to show that it is more challenging to achieve the same in High Schools. It has also shown that the more radical the adjustments the school needs to make, the slower the change process is likely to be. Against this backdrop, the report also demonstrates that the School Development and Support Model has resulted in significant improvements in each of the High Schools within three years.

In particular, there are clear signs that the sense of helplessness and passivity that prevailed in 2008 is steadily being replaced by a developing sense of confidence and agency.

Improved leadership, management and administration have led to the establishment of reasonably functional school management teams and administrative systems where there were none to speak of in 2008. They have also resulted in new initiatives towards curriculum planning and coordination across grades and phases; attempts at working in subject teams; and the early stages of reflective teaching practices. Similarly, there has been a gradual increase in the use of textbooks and teacher's guides, and a growing openness towards more progressive teaching methods.

The host of school improvement initiatives undertaken and sustained by the schools during the three project years are further evidence of increased agency. Particularly encouraging are the fruits of improved cooperation between the schools and their local communities, local authorities, district offices, municipalities and NGOs.

Finally, there are also encouraging signs of improving learner pass rates. In particular, the levelling out of results across the FET phase suggests that the project is effectively addressing the previous neglect of Grades 10 and 11 and in so doing, is building firmer foundations for the critical Grade 12 year.

All of these are significant improvements over the situations in each of the schools before implementation in 2008. However, while overall pass rates have improved in five of the six schools, there is still a lot of work to be done to further increase the pass rates, and especially to improve the quality of the passes.

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<sup>1</sup> See the other reports listed at the end of this report.

## **Introduction**

The Maskew Miller Longman Foundation is an independent Educational Trust, established by Pearson Southern Africa in 2007 to support best teaching and learning practices in challenging, under-resourced and disadvantaged contexts in South Africa.

A 6-month baseline study conducted in six disadvantaged High Schools and ten Primary Schools in four provinces in 2008 identified significant dislocations between the Department of Basic Education's curriculum management and implementation policy requirements<sup>2</sup>.

In response to this situation, the Foundation developed a School Development and Support Model that aimed to explore how the Department's existing District Officials could more effectively enable the majority of disadvantaged and under-resourced schools to implement curriculum policy requirements more successfully, in as short a time as possible<sup>3</sup>.

The model was implemented in 16 disadvantaged schools (10 Primary and 6 High Schools) from 2009 – 2011 through the Foundation's School Development and Support Project. Previous project reports have documented the positive impacts the project has had on the 10 Primary Schools, particularly in terms of the project's main objective – to significantly improve Literacy and Numeracy results within three years<sup>4</sup>.

While five of the six High Schools achieved modest improvements in learner results compared to the Primary Schools, they achieved significant improvements in key aspects of basic school functionality that provide firm foundations for improved teaching and learning over the next few years.

### **The purpose of this report**

In reviewing the High School project experience, this report:

- Provides an overview of some of the issues that make turning High Schools around more challenging than Primary Schools
- Summarizes the Foundation's school support and development interventions in the High Schools
- Reviews the impact of the project over three years
- Recommends next steps towards enabling the High Schools to achieve the sorts of successes that the project's Primary Schools have

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<sup>2</sup> See Kariem and Langhan, April 2009.

<sup>3</sup> See Kariem and Langhan, October 2009.

<sup>4</sup> See the list of reports on the School Development and Support Project on page 20.

## SECTION 1

### Introducing the High Schools

This section provides an overview of the contexts that the project's disadvantaged High Schools function within, in order to contextualize the improvements they have achieved within the three years of implementation.

#### A visual introduction

First, a selection of photographs provides a quick visual introduction to illustrate:

- On the one hand - The many factors impacting on them such as: location, distance and time; poverty; access to resources; lack of basic facilities such as toilets, water, ablutions, electricity, sporting and other extra-mural opportunities; poor maintenance of existing facilities; over-crowded classrooms; and daily transport challenges
- And on the other – The commitment and dedication of the teachers and learners who, in spite of the many challenges, attend school every day; and the pride with which the learners wear their uniforms and present themselves.

#### Four of the six schools



### Poor maintenance



### Poor nutrition programme facilities



### Over-crowded classrooms



## Long-drop ablution blocks



## Transport challenges



## Factors impacting on the day-to-day lives of schools

Second, a summary the kinds of factors that impact on the day-to-day life of these schools:

- Widespread poverty and associated illiteracy, ill health<sup>5</sup> and social ills<sup>6</sup>
- Entrenched traditional beliefs about authority, teaching and learning, and associated practices, that clash with the democratic, participatory requirements of current curriculum policies
- Poor leadership and management
- Poor financial management due to lack of training on the one hand; and frequently conflicting perspectives of SGBs and school staff about financial priorities
- Ineffective LTSM procurement and delivery systems

<sup>5</sup> HIV/AIDS, TB, worms, malnutrition, recurring infections and difficulty in accessing medical care are some of the more significant challenges

<sup>6</sup> Violence and abuse, teenage pregnancies, traditional 'teen' marriages, child led homes; and orphans living alone or with caretaker families are examples of the kinds of issues impacting on more rural schools. Unlike the Western Cape, in Mpumalanga, Kwa/Zulu Natal and the Eastern Cape, there appear to be much lower incidences of substance abuse and foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

- Irregular learner attendance due to the demands of a subsistence lifestyle, traditional practices and running child-headed homes
- Significant learner knowledge and skill gaps due to widespread illiteracy and poor education histories in feeder Primary Schools
- Learners repeating a grade up to 4 times before dropping out of school
- Under-qualified teachers
- Significant teacher knowledge and skill gaps
- Restrictive teaching practices
- Inadequate teaching competency in English which is for most teacher and learners a second, third or foreign language that is not used outside of classrooms
- The legacy of schools as sites of political struggle
- Powerful and too often disruptive influence of teachers unions
- Friction between teacher unions
- A general atmosphere of political intolerance
- Regular extended disruptions of schooling (by both teacher union and learner actions)
- Unions barring officials from quality monitoring visits to schools
- Under-resourced districts and under-trained officials unable to provide meaningful school support.
- All three districts only appointed curriculum advisors for the first time in 2008 and 2009
- Only one of the three districts has circuit offices. As a result the majority of Circuit Managers work from home or a school near to where they live.

At the same time schools are under enormous pressure by the National and Provincial Departments to deliver under very challenging circumstances, without receiving training or support. For example:

- Produce better results – particularly for the grades assessed by the Annual National Assessments (Grades 3, 6 and 9) and Grade 12
- Officials requiring compliance with policy requirements for which they have not provided training or implementation support
- Principals are required to sign performance agreements requiring them to achieve the above, without receiving significant training or implementation support; and are under threat of being charged if they do not deliver on the expectations in the agreement.

### **Examples of other challenges impacting on High Schools**

Finally, a quick review of a number of other challenges that arose during the three years of implementation:

#### **In 2009:**

- The appointment of acting principals at two of the schools to replace principals who had embezzled school funds, and had been ‘chased away’ by angry learners in 2008. Both principals were suspended on full salary, but could not be dismissed due to HR technicalities
- Both new acting principals’ authority was severely undermined by the ‘acting’ and ‘temporary’ nature of their appointments

- A female teacher who had been transferred from a city to take up a principal's post in one of the rural project schools was consistently undermined by the local SGB and parent body, and almost forced to leave due to a combination of political and cultural intolerance and gender discrimination.
- After agreeing to participate in the project voluntarily, half of the staff at two schools resisted participation in project activities because of ongoing leadership problems at one school, and a division among the staff at the other
- An acting District Director was appointed in Bushbuckridge to replace an ousted Director. SADTU enforced a 'go slow' resistance action in schools for most of the year because they did not support the acting Director or the appointments he was trying to make to fill vacant district posts

#### **In 2010:**

- Bushbuckridge - SADTU barred District Officials from entering schools due to ongoing disputes with the district over the appointment of officials. This eventually led to the relocation of the District Director to Nelspruit
- Re-negotiating the performance contracts with the two schools where leadership and staff issues slowed progress considerably
- Ongoing tensions between the newly appointed female principal and the parent community
- The extended 2010 Soccer World Cup mid-year holiday. (There is no clear evidence to suggest that the DoBE's catch-up programme had any significant impact on improving results in that year).
- A protracted teacher strike around salary increases during the third term
- Tensions between district officials and schools around the strike, leading to officials being barred from entering their own offices. Most were forced to work from home or from Circuit offices for most of the second half of the year
- A learner strike soon after the teacher strike
- Teacher shortages and poor teacher qualifications
- Teacher resistance to new curriculum teaching, learning and assessment practices
- Regular rain and wind storm damage to access roads, bridges and classrooms disrupting attendance and school routines
- Damaged classrooms exacerbated the overcrowded classroom situation in the Eastern Cape

#### **In 2011:**

- Serious disruptions in the Eastern Cape due to the Education Department's simultaneous termination of temporary teaching posts and suspension of the learner transport and school nutrition programmes as a consequence of financial mismanagement
- Non-payment of teachers

- Ongoing political wrangling over education in the Eastern Cape
- Inadequate supply of Maths and Physics teachers
- The Eastern Cape Department's attempts to redeploy excess urban teachers to rural schools led to a legal challenge that continues to cause 'go-slow' disruptions.
- Inconsistencies in the standard of common papers set by district officials in the KwaZulu/Natal project district (featured in the Sunday Times)

### **The impact of these realities on policy implementation**

Given the contextual realities of these schools, it was not surprising to find that in 2008, most project schools were characterised by a deep sense of helplessness associated with an apparent absence of any real sense of personal or group agency. As a consequence, there was very little evidence of change aligned with post-1994 policy requirements. Instead:

- There was widespread complicity in the non-implementation of new policies;
- Pre-1994 values, attitudes and practices prevailed; as did
- Persistently low expectations from officials, teachers and learners

As a result:

- Teachers were being appraised against criteria they had not been exposed to and had not attempted to implement
- Learners were being assessed against criteria they had not been exposed to
- There was widespread window-dressing at every level of the system to create and sustain the 'illusion' that policies were being implemented

### **Comments**

This summary of the contextual realities impacting on the daily life of these, and many other disadvantaged schools, helps to explain:

- How serious the dislocations between policy and practice are in many disadvantaged contexts
- How it has been possible for learner results to remain so 'resistant to improvement' over almost two decades

It also highlights:

- The complexity of the challenge of turning High Schools around
- The urgent need for the Department of Basic Education and its District Officials to find new ways to enable High Schools operating in challenging contexts to become effective

## SECTION 2

### **The School Development and Support Project**

In response to the understanding of the realities faced by the project schools discussed in Section 1, the Foundation developed a model to support district officials to enable schools to meaningfully implement curriculum policy<sup>7</sup> requirements in as short a time as possible, within existing district and school budget parameters<sup>8</sup>.

### **Addressing dislocations**

The model aimed to establish the basic functionality necessary to support effective curriculum implementation in the schools by addressing dislocations between policy expectations and actual practices over a three-year period. This meant aiming to establish more effective leadership, management and curriculum implementation practices through a three-phase intervention planned for implementation over three years:

**Phase 1:** Establish basic functionality practices<sup>9</sup>

**Phase 2:** Consolidate and improve functionality; establish basic professional development practices

**Phase 3:** Establish a culture of ongoing professional development

### **Support interventions**

The two main interventions designed to achieve the above are: Provide essential resources; and provide essential support as explained briefly below.

#### **1) Provide essential resources**

These are teaching, learning and assessment resources that provincial, district and school budgets are supposed to provide for, but have not done due to the poor requisition and delivery systems discussed earlier.

To ensure that every teacher and learner had all of the materials they needed for every subject, the schools were offered the following options:

- 1) Top up existing stocks of textbooks and materials with the school's allocated funds (choose any books you want from any publisher)
- 2) Top up existing stocks with donated MML textbooks (choose from a range of books in MML's catalogue)

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<sup>7</sup> The broader socio-economic issues impacting on schools are beyond the scope of the project.

<sup>8</sup> See Kariem and Langhan, October 2009.

<sup>9</sup> As required by the PAM, WSE, IQMS, NNSSF and NCS guideline documents discussed in previous project reports.

3) Replace existing stocks of books with donated MML textbook series.

Every school chose option 3), partly to make the most of the opportunity to ensure that all textbooks were current and aligned with the NCS; and partly because they appreciated that a series was more likely than a selection of unrelated textbooks, to ensure thematic and conceptual progression between subjects, Grades and Phases.

So, to model the teaching and learning materials dimension of the 'conducive learning environment' that schools should provide, the project donated the following resources over the three years.

#### Resources donated over three years

<p><b>2009</b> All 6 schools received:</p>	<p><b>LTSMs for every teacher &amp; learner, in every subject <sup>10</sup>:</b></p> <p><b>The Today Series for Grades 8 and 9:</b> Teacher's Guides; Textbooks; and associated ancillary items such as posters, charts and calculators</p> <p><b>The Focus Series for Grades 10 - 12:</b> Teacher's Guides; Textbooks; associated ancillary items such as posters, charts and calculators</p>
<p><b>2010</b> All schools received:  3 schools also received:</p>	<p><b>Supplementary classroom kits including <sup>11</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grade appropriate dictionaries, atlases and supplementary readers</li> <li>- Focus Series Study Guides and Exam Bank CDs to support examination preparation</li> </ul> <p><b>Grade 12 X-Kits to further support examination preparation for<sup>12</sup>:</b> Maths Maths Literacy Accounting English</p>
<p><b>2011:</b> All schools received:</p>	<p><b>A computer and printer to<sup>13</sup>:</b> Support administrative functions Support curriculum planning Streamline the processing of assessment results Prepare mock exam papers from the Focus Series Exam Banks Access online policy guidelines and other resources</p>

## 2) Provide essential support

This refers to the professional support that curriculum policies expect District Officials to provide in order to enable schools to understand, implement and manage the curriculum more meaningfully and effectively<sup>14</sup>. It emphasizes regular, supportive, practical, school- and classroom-based monitoring, reflection, training, and coaching in the three key focus areas outlined below.

<sup>10</sup> Provided by Maskew Miller Longman

<sup>11</sup> Also provided by Maskew Miller Longman

<sup>12</sup> Provided by Pearson Education South Africa

<sup>13</sup> Also provided by Maskew Miller Longman

<sup>14</sup> This kind of support is also implied, but not made explicit enough, in different national and provincial versions of district job descriptions

### The three key focus areas

<p><b>2009 – 2011</b> All six schools received:</p>	<p><b>Practical school-based training focussed on</b></p> <p><b>1) Leaders and management teams:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Understand and acknowledge their curriculum leadership and management roles and responsibilities</li><li>- Know how to improve and align their systems, procedures and practices with them</li><li>- Have guided experiences of how to implement them practically</li></ul> <p><b>2) Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Understand curriculum requirements</li><li>- Know how to align classroom planning, preparation, textbook use and teaching methods with them</li><li>- Understand how teacher's guides and textbooks embody curriculum requirements; provide teaching guidelines to compensate for inadequate training; and provide content, learning and assessment activities designed to fulfil curriculum requirements</li><li>- Understand why it is important to work systematically through textbooks</li><li>- Have guided experiences of how to implement the above practically</li></ul> <p><b>3) Administrators and general workers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Understand how to support their leaders, managers and teachers to implement the above</li><li>- Have guided experiences of how to implement this support practically</li></ul>
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This support is provided to each school via twelve full-day school-based visits per year: two school visits to each school per term (one of two days, and the other of one day).

## SECTION 3

### Impact of the project within three years

Five of the six High Schools have achieved improvements in all three key focus areas. Although these improvements are generally less impressive than those of the Primary Schools on the project, and have not yet impacted as significantly on learner results; they are nevertheless significant when considered against:

- The complex High School context summarised above in Section 1
- The degree of dysfunction in these schools prior to implementation<sup>15</sup>

So, the achievements outlined below are encouraging indications of what is possible under challenging circumstances, with appropriate support, in response to actual needs identified in consultation with the schools. They help to identify the most basic first steps towards becoming more effective schools that are often taken for granted or overlooked by school improvement projects. They also provide insights into:

- What it takes to establish basic functionality as a necessary first step towards turning schools around
- What can realistically be expected from an intervention of this kind within three years
- The many other issues beyond the scope of this project that would need to be addressed simultaneously<sup>16</sup> in order to accelerate the change process in these kinds of schools
- The sort of approach and pacing necessary for interventions to take root and become sustainable
- Possible complementary interventions to facilitate quicker improvements

### Improved basic functionality

Here we refer to basic requirements for effective organisational functioning such as: clear understandings of roles and responsibilities; clear, transparent communication; delegation of functions and performance monitoring against agreed objectives; taking responsibility for and holding one another accountable for specific tasks; and effective administrative and reporting procedures.

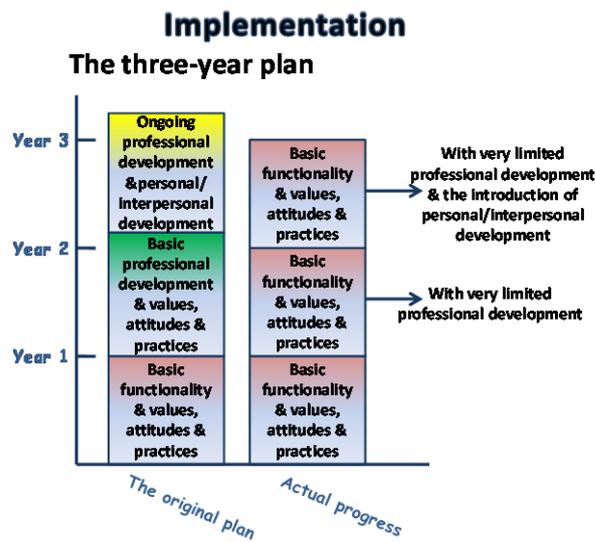
Improved leadership, management and administration in all of the schools have led to the establishment of reasonably functional school management teams and administrative systems, where there were none to speak of in 2008. They have also resulted in new initiatives towards curriculum planning and coordination across grades and phases; and attempts at working in subject teams in more collaborative and professional ways.

Like the Primary Schools, after three years of developmental support, the High Schools have taken significant steps towards the desired 'basic school and classroom functionality'; but have not made as much progress as hoped for, as illustrated in the following diagram.

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<sup>15</sup> See See Kariem and Langhan, April 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See Section 1 of this report for examples.



In short, it has taken three years to achieve what we originally hoped to achieve in the first year of implementation. After three years, most of the High Schools still have a long way to go to consolidate effective basic functionality. For this reason, a fourth year of reduced support is currently being provided.

### **Evidence of a developing sense of agency**

As a consequence of the improved basic functionality, there is clear evidence of a new awareness of possibilities and a growing sense of responsibility and agency in the schools. This section highlights three main areas of achievement that illustrate this: community relations; classroom practices; and the use of LTSMs.

#### **Improved community relations**

The following are examples of a range of school improvement initiatives undertaken independently by the schools in cooperation with their local communities during the course of the project:

- Inviting District Officials to come and review their staff development, teacher and learner portfolios; and to monitor their newly implemented structures, processes and practices
- Motivating a local municipal authority, a District Director, the Chair of a school governing body and Eskom to collaborate in order to connect a school to the electricity grid
- Engaging an NGO to secure a piped water connection to a school
- Approaching local tribal authorities to secure funds for school renovations
- Renovating:
  - Administrative office space to create a reception area for parents
  - A dilapidated classroom to create a school library
  - Staff rooms to provide teachers with secure cupboards
- Involving unemployed ex-learners in repairing desks and chairs

- Building:
  - Four new classrooms to replace mud classrooms
  - A new kitchen area for a newly implemented school nutrition programme
  - Encouraging parents to donate the bricks to build a new classroom
- Liaising with:
  - A District Office to arrange busses to transport learners
  - The local police forum about school security issues
  - The local clinic for health services
  - Home Affairs to provide learners with identity documents

### **Improving classroom practices**

In most classrooms there is evidence of:

- Better organized teacher and learner portfolios
- Limited improvement in the use of teacher's guides and textbooks leading to:
  - Improved lesson planning
  - More frequent (but not frequent enough) use of English as the language of learning and teaching
  - A slightly broader range of teaching , learning and assessment strategies
  - Slightly increased learner participation in the form of more opportunities to:
    - Read from and use their textbooks during lessons and to do homework
    - Give their own responses rather than repeating a teacher's
    - Complete more written work than at the same time in 2008
    - Improved curriculum coverage

However, apart from a few exceptions, most of the High School teachers appear to be less flexible and more resistant than their Primary School counterparts. As a result, many of the improvements they have made appear to take the form of adaptations of the status quo, rather than of embracing the new ways of thinking and being required by the curriculum. The result is a blend of teacher-dominated and teacher-led classroom practices, requiring passive, compliant learners.

### **Gradually improving use of LTSMs**

As discussed above, there has been a gradual increase in the use of textbooks and teacher's guides, and a resistant but growing openness towards more progressive teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

However, for most of the teachers it is still a very new experience to actually have all of the LTSMs they need, and even more unfamiliar to engage with learners who all have their own textbooks. This is largely as a result of number of contributing factors including:

- Low levels of literacy and the absence of English at home and in the surrounding communities
- Low confidence about using English among teachers and learners
- Poor English proficiency of both teachers and learners
- Inadequate preparation of teachers to use English as the language of teaching, learning and especially assessment
- The consequent prevalence of African language use in English medium classes
- The legacy of a poor education resulting in significant knowledge and conceptual gaps that both teachers and learners
- Very poor – and in many cases, non-existent - curriculum training
- A general discomfort with books and a lack of confidence to use them
- An ‘embedded culture’ of only teachers using textbooks
- Feeling intimidated by the small dense print of teacher’s guides, and the unfamiliar teaching methods suggested in them
- Feeling overwhelmed by the unfamiliar learning activities provided in textbooks
- The late, non-delivery and incorrect delivery of textbooks
- Mistrust of successive curriculum and associated textbook changes

As a result, adjusting to using the donated LTSMs as intended has been a greater challenge than anticipated. For many teachers, using a teacher’s guide and textbook meaningfully is unfamiliar and cumbersome. So, ironically and contrary to expectations, being expected to demonstrate consistent use of these LTSMs, along with associated ancillary items such as readers, charts, study guides and CDs has in many cases had more of an ‘information overload’ effect than the anticipated enabling impact.

Additional factors undermining the effective use of LTSMs include:

- Learners who have read ahead of their teachers’ have been observed to ask questions and interact far more in lessons than those who don’t. While this is precisely what the NCS intends, this ‘independent behaviour’ is often perceived by teachers as threatening. As a result, it is not uncommon for teachers revert to restricting learner access to textbooks as a way of protecting themselves from being exposed as less knowledgeable than their learners.
- This puts learners under pressure to limit their focus to the work that their teachers prioritise for them.

So, in spite of training and demonstrations of how to use the LTSMs<sup>17</sup>, the combined impact of the above meant that by the end of 2011:

- The use of the teacher’s guides and textbooks was still inconsistent and unsystematic
- Supplementary materials (such as Grade 12 X Kits, Study Guide and Exam Bank materials) were not yet being meaningfully used

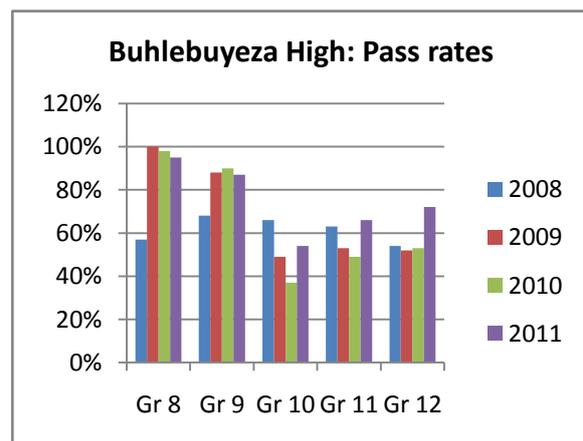
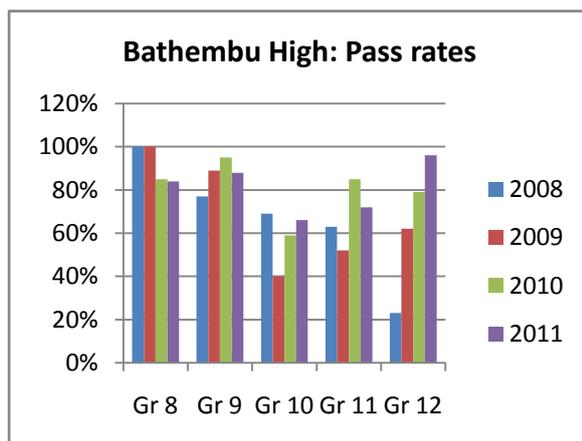
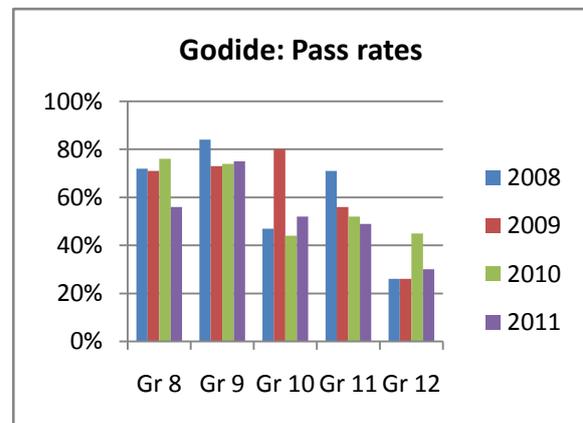
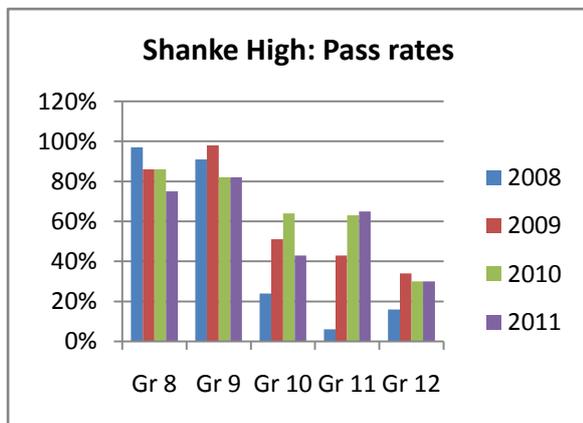
### Modestly improved learner results

This section reviews the High School learner results for the period 2008 – 2011.

#### Overall pass rates: Grades 8 – 12

Four of the schools include Grades 8 – 12. Their results are compared below to illustrate broad trends in the Senior and FET Phase results.

#### Mpumalanga High Schools



#### Comments:

Grade 8 and 9 pass rates dropped in five and improved in three of the 8 Grades between 2008 and 2011. Reasons for these drops include:

<sup>17</sup> This training was done in an ongoing way by both the Foundation’s Project Managers and Maskew Miller Longman Sales Representatives.

- Significant disruptions to teaching time as outlined in Section 1
- Teachers and learners adjusting to the new curriculum for the first time, while simultaneously adapting to using teacher’s guides and textbooks and experimenting with new styles of teaching and learning.

The unintended negative impact of adjustments such as these on learner results in High School contexts should not be under-estimated in the first year or two. This is especially the case if the adjustments require radical departures from deeply entrenched previous teaching and learning practices.

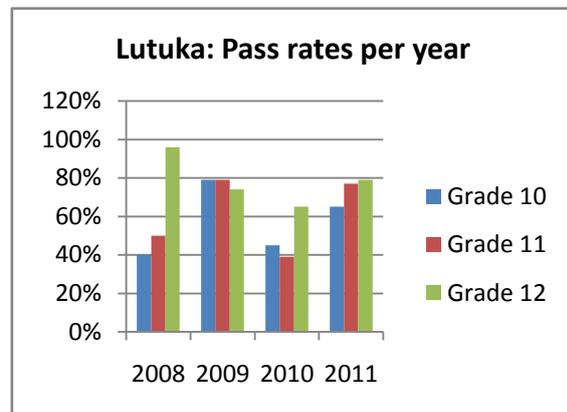
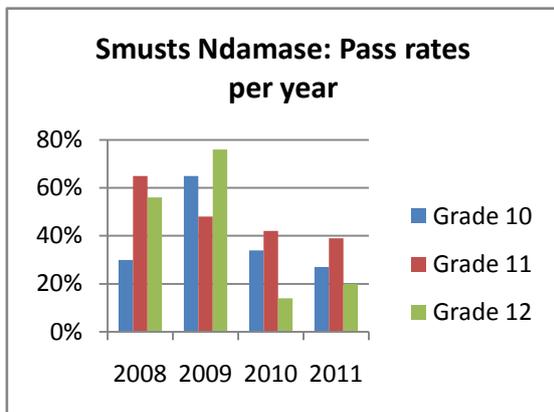
Grade 8 and 9 pass rates were much better than those of Grades 10 – 12 across all four schools. According to teachers in all of the schools, this is because:

- The Department’s heavy emphasis on achieving the best possible Grade 12 results has had the unintended effect of neglecting Grades 10 and 11 in terms of LTSM provision, focus of attention, and teaching time.
- This results in significant drops in the results of these Grades, and means that by the time learners get to Grade 12, they require a great deal of attention to be prepared for the final examinations, thus perpetuating a cycle that neglects the first two FET years and over-emphasizes the last.

### Overall pass rates: Grades 10 – 12

The following graphs illustrate FET Phase trends across all six schools.

#### Eastern Cape High Schools



#### Smuts Ndamase - results have not yet begun to improve

Although curriculum planning has become more meaningful and teachers and learners are benefitting from having all the teaching and learning materials they need, pass rates deteriorated in all three grades. This is in part because:

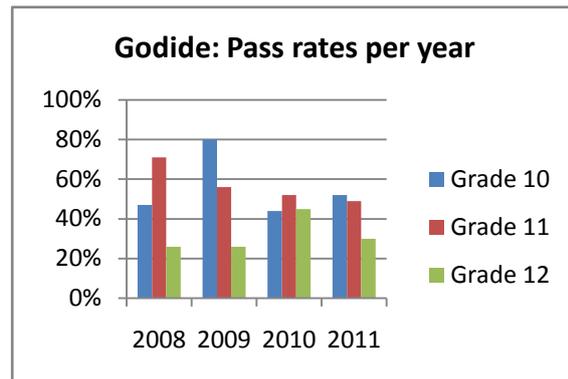
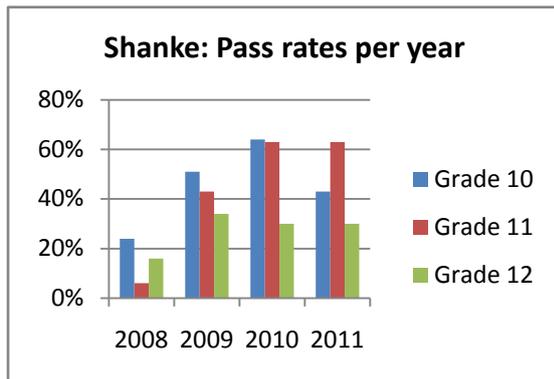
- Conditions at this schools are particularly challenging
- The school still has a long way to go to achieve effective basic functionality

- Both teachers and learners are struggling to adapt to the radical departures from their normal practices that the project/new policies require

### Lutuka - results have begun to improve

Over the three years, results improved initially, dropped off, and then began to recover steadily across all 3 grades. By the end of 2011 the results across Grades 10 – 12 were much closer to each other than they had been in 2008.

### Mpumalanga High Schools



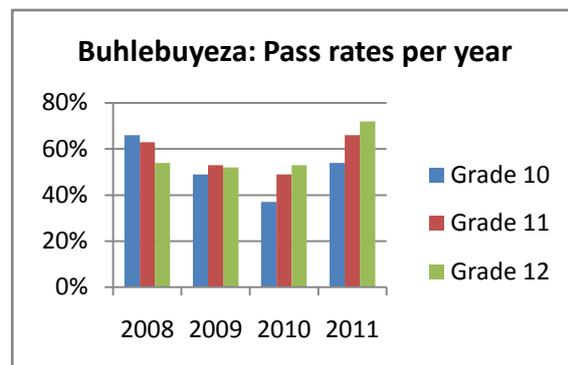
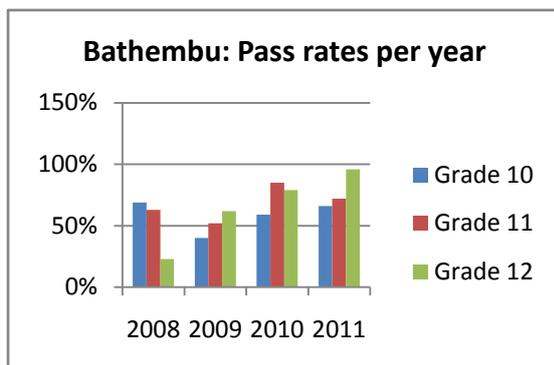
### Shanke - improved learner results

Overall pass rates steadily improved in 2009 and 2010. By the end of 2011 results had dropped off in Grade 10, but remained significantly better than 2008 pass rates across all three Grades.

### Godide – more or less consistent results

By 2011 Grade 10 and 12 results had improved marginally, while Grade 11 pass rates had dropped significantly. However, all three Grades were scoring at rates closer to each other than in 2008.

### KwaZulu/Natal High Schools



### Bathembu – Significantly improved Grade 12 results

Grade 10 and 11 results remained more or less constant over the three years, while the Grade 12 results improved significantly in each year - from just over 20% in 2008, to almost 100% in 2011. Again, all three Grades were scoring at rates closer to each other than in 2008.

### Buhlebuyeza – Improved Grade 11 and 12 pass rates

While Grade 10 pass rates dropped by around 10% over the three years, Grade 11 results improved marginally and Grade 12 results improved by around 10%. Similarly, all three Grades were scoring at rates closer to each other than in 2008.

#### Comments:

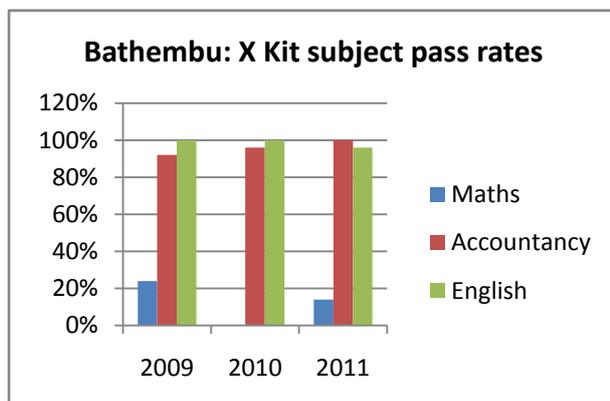
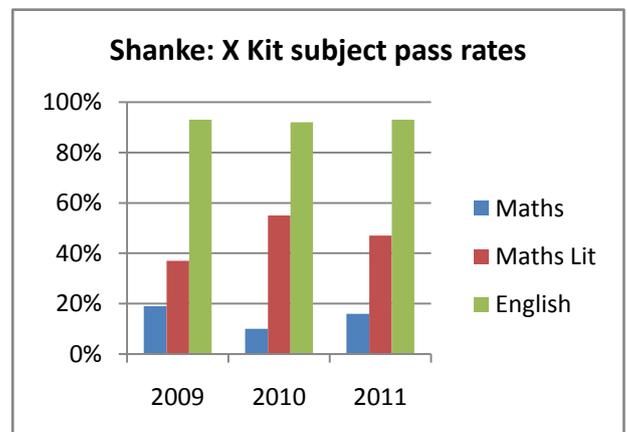
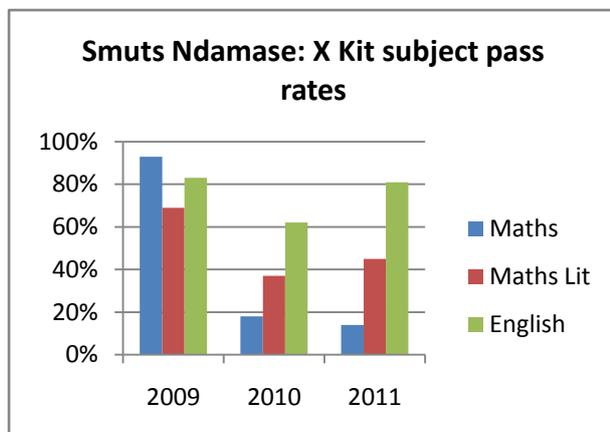
Although the results are not as impressive as the project’s Primary Schools, there are nevertheless clear signs of gradual improvement in five of the six schools as follows:

- Significantly improved Grade 12 pass rates at Bathembu and improved pass rates at Buhlebuyeza, Shanke and Godide
- Significantly improved pass rates across all three Grades at Shanke
- Stabilizing and more consistent pass rates across all three Grades in four of the six schools

### The impact of Grade 12 study guides

As explained in earlier in this section, neither the Grade 12 Focus Study Guides, nor the X Kits have been meaningfully used by the schools since their donation in 2009 and 2010 respectively. So we can confirm that, at this stage, neither has had an opportunity to impact on learner results.

However, since we have been tracking the Grade 12 results in the three schools selected to have access to both sets of materials; the results are included below to confirm our observations.



## Comments

- At Smuts Ndamase the significant drops in Maths and Maths Literacy are consistent with the overall drop in the school's Grade 12 results as already discussed
- At the other two schools, most results have remained more or less consistently good or poor
- Apart from one anomaly at Smuts Ndamase in 2009 (before the X Kits were donated), Maths pass rates are consistently dismal in all three schools
- Pass rates are good for English at all three schools, and for Accountancy at one

## Pass rates VS quality of passes

While there are clear and encouraging signs of improvement in the general Grade 12 pass rates and the levelling out of pass rates across all three Grades, there is still much to be done about the quality of the passes. This is illustrated in the following table that provides insights into what the overall pass rates actually mean.

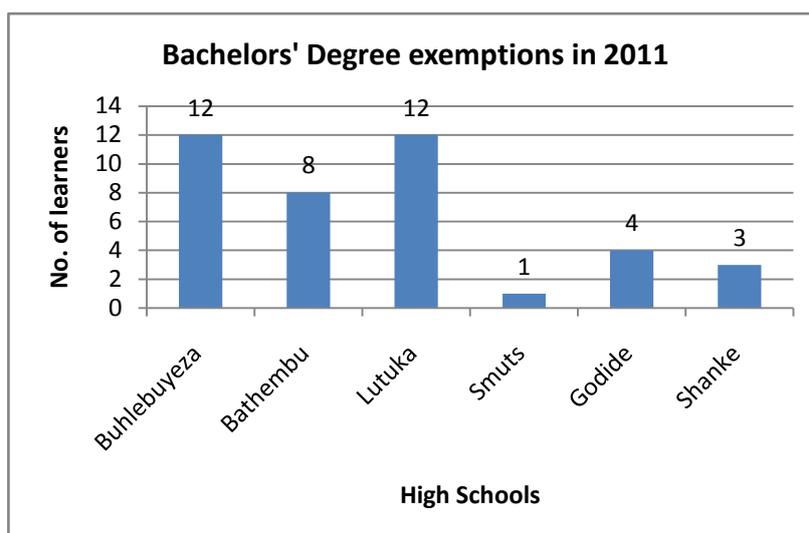
High School	Grade 12 Learners	Pass	Fail	Bachelors	Diploma	Supplementary Exams
Buhlebuyeza	69	49	20	12	37	16
Bathembu	27	26	1	8	18	1
Lutuka	58	48	10	12	36	10
Smuts Ndamase	159	39	120	1	38	106
Godide	63	19	43	4	15	39
Shanke	110	33	77	3	30	75

## Comments:

- Failure rates are significant at all but one school; as are the number of learners who have to write supplementary examinations in an attempt to pass<sup>18</sup>.
- The number of learners achieving Bachelors (university exemptions) is extremely low in all six schools as illustrated below. This is particularly the case at Smuts Ndamase (1 out of 159); Shanke (3 out of 110); and Godide (4 out of 63).

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<sup>18</sup> According to the principals the number of learners who fail their supplementary exams and repeat the Grade up to four times is significant.



### Grade 12 Maths: performance categories at Lutuka High

For the High Schools, the project analysed overall pass rates for the Departmental examinations because they 'have credibility' with the Department and are what matter to the public. For this reason, we chose not to design our own assessment instruments (as we did for the Primary Schools). Unfortunately, this limited the data we could access and precluded the possibility of detailed analyses beyond the level of overall pass rates.

However, thanks to a collaborative venture with Pearson Education Achievement Solutions (PEAS) at one of the project schools<sup>19</sup> in March 2012, we have been able to analyze in great detail how well prepared Grade 12 learners in the third month of the first term were for the Grade 12 curriculum<sup>20</sup>. The diagnostic reports reviewed briefly below clearly identify what learners had mastered by the end of Grade 11 in preparation for the Grade 12 curriculum; and provide critical diagnostic information for the teachers to work with during 2012. They also provide an opportunity to compare the very poor Maths pass rates in the three X-Kit schools discussed above, with those of Lutuka High, one of the better performing schools on the project.

### Lutuka High's Maths results

#### Diagnostic performance categories

With reference to PEAS's diagnostic performance categories attached in Appendix 1, of the 75 learners assessed in March 2012:

- 50 (two-thirds) scored below 40%
- Only 2 learners scored between 60 – 69%
- None scored above 70%

#### Cognitive attributes scoring between 0% and 30%

Given that two-thirds of the learners scored below 40%, Appendices 2, 3 and 4 provide a detailed breakdown of scoring patterns between 0 – 30% to reveal how

<sup>19</sup> In exchange for piloting a Grade 12 Maths diagnostic assessment instrument at the Lutuka High School, PEAS provided the Foundation with their results.

<sup>20</sup> The assessment instruments were set up to assess Grade 10 and 11 Maths in order to determine how good a foundation had been laid for Grade 12.

extremely under-prepared these learners are for Grade 12 Maths in terms of almost every aspect of the curriculum they should already have covered by the end of Grade 11.

### **Comments:**

These results:

- Confirm that Maths is a critical area requiring specialised support in all of the project schools
- Suggest that:
  - Foundational concepts are not being properly established in earlier grades; or are being 'unlearned' during the high school years
  - The consequent conceptual gaps among high school maths learners require a great deal more remediation than teachers are currently able to provide
  - Teachers are either assuming too much about learners' foundational knowledge; or are unable to recognize and 'diagnose' conceptual gaps and develop appropriate remedial strategies to address these gaps
- Provide insights into the self-defeating strategy of repeatedly attempting to 'resuscitate' completely unprepared Grade 12 learners in their last year at school<sup>21</sup>. In the process Grades 10 and 11 are repeatedly neglected, guaranteeing the same Grade 12 'state of emergency' each year.
- Illustrate the severity of the challenge of turning poor learner performance around in terms of just Maths
- Provide insights into what is clearly a general trend across most subjects in High Schools<sup>22</sup>.

### **Conclusions**

The Foundation's numerous previous reports demonstrate that in Primary Schools basic functionality and learner results can be dramatically improved within three years<sup>23</sup>.

This report has provided evidence to show that it is more challenging to achieve the same in High Schools. It has also shown that the more radical the adjustments the school needs to make, the slower the change process is likely to be. Against this backdrop, the report also demonstrates that the School Support and Development Project has resulted in significant improvements in each of the High Schools within three years.

In particular, there are clear signs that the sense of helplessness and passivity that prevailed in 2008 is steadily being replaced by a developing sense of confidence and agency.

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<sup>21</sup> Part of this strategy has in recent years included ensuring that Grade 12s are provided with all the learning materials they need – for the first time in their school career – in their last year of school; at the expense of Grades 10 and 11 who remain as un-resourced as ever.

<sup>22</sup> This has been repeatedly confirmed by annual Grade 12 results, and by the Annual National Assessments and several international comparative studies such as TIMMS, PIRLS and SAQMEC.

<sup>23</sup> See the other reports listed at the end of this report.

Improved leadership, management and administration have led to the establishment of reasonably functional school management teams and more effective systems and processes where there were none to speak of in 2008. They have also resulted in new initiatives towards curriculum planning and coordination across grades and phases; attempts at working in subject teams; and the early stages of reflective teaching and monitoring practices. Similarly, there has been a gradual increase in the use of textbooks and teacher's guides, and a growing openness towards more progressive teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

The host of school improvement initiatives undertaken and sustained by the schools during the three project years are clear indications of how they have begun to take responsibility for their own development, providing strong evidence of their increasing sense of agency and decreasing sense of helplessness. Particularly encouraging are the fruits of improved cooperation between the schools and their local communities, local authorities, district offices, municipalities and NGOs.

Finally, there are also encouraging signs of improving learner pass rates. In particular, the levelling out of results across the FET phase suggests that the project is effectively addressing the previous neglect of Grades 10 and 11 and in so doing, is building firmer foundations for the critical Grade 12 year.

All of these are significant improvements over the situations in each of the schools before implementation in 2008. However, while overall pass rates have improved in five of the six schools, there is still a lot of work to be done to raise pass rates to satisfactory levels, and especially to improve the quality of the passes.

### **Recommendations**

To help the High Schools progress beyond the improvements they have achieved over three years, it will be necessary to significantly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through sustained support. In this regard, we propose the following recommendations.

#### **Provide three more years of support**

The trends discussed in this report suggest that at least another three years will be required to enable the schools to progress through the three phases of development outlined in the original three-year school development plan discussed in Sections 2 and 3.

#### **Stick to the same basic support plan**

As envisaged in the original three-year plan, the support should continue to focus on the following key areas identified by the schools and originally intended for year 1:

1. Consolidate basic functionality in terms of leadership, management and administration on the one hand; and classroom practices on the other.
2. Maintain the focus on developing individual and group confidence and agency, with particular emphasis on developing instructional leadership capacity (focussed on leading teaching, learning and assessment)
3. Place greater emphasis on enabling and requiring teachers and learners to use all available LTSMs consistently and systematically.
4. Maintain the professional development focus on developing thinking, reading and writing skills across the curriculum.

Phase in the following as per the original plan for years 2 and 3:

5. Teacher training in basic inter-personal and cognitive academic language proficiencies<sup>24</sup> in English in order to increase capacity to teach through the medium of English
6. Subject specialist training directed at identified weaknesses with emphases on subject specific: content, skills and teaching, learning and assessment strategies identified through 7 below.

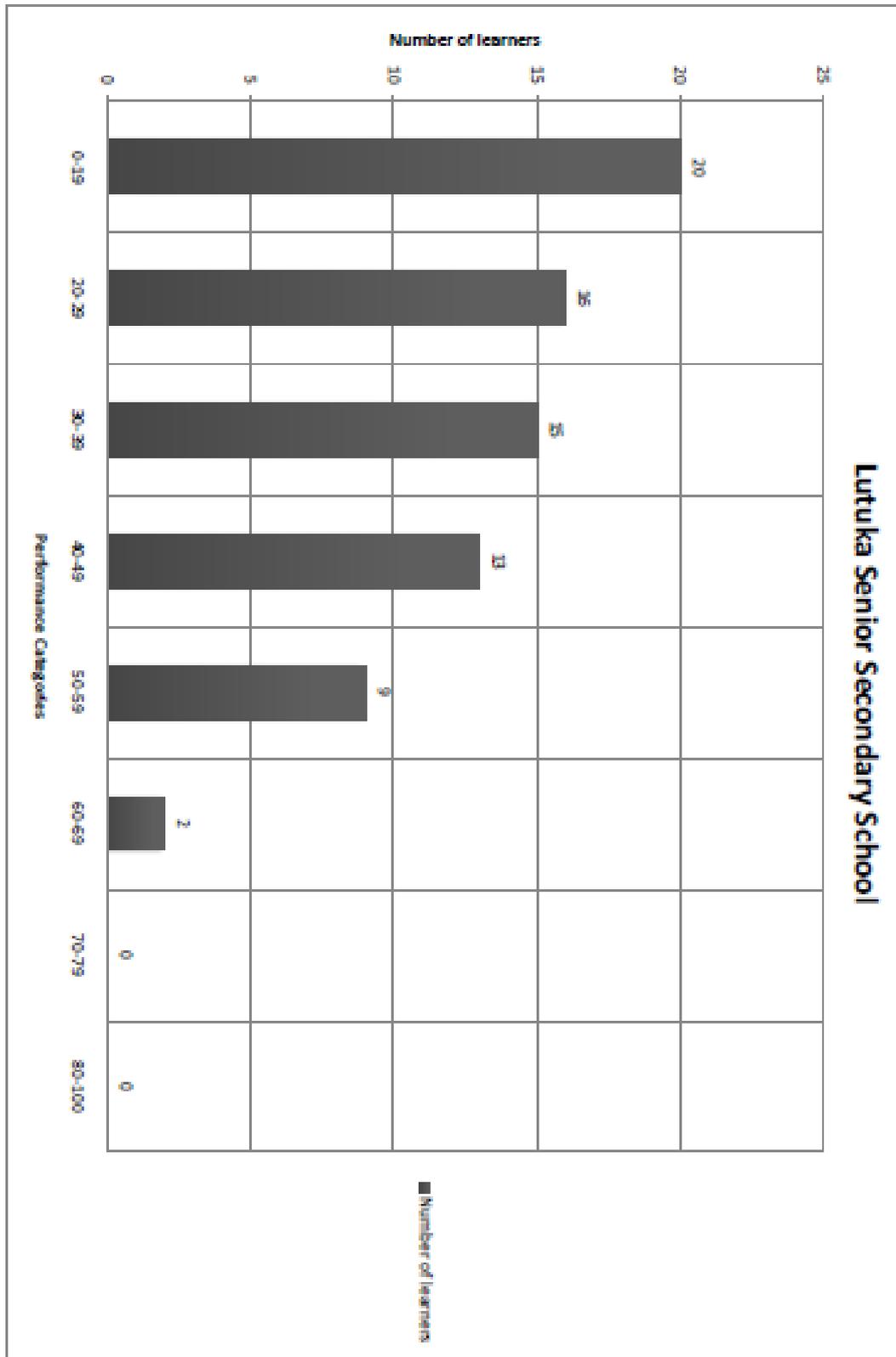
Finally, based on the significant impact that the project's own assessments and activity-by-activity diagnostic feedback reports had on teaching and learners results in the Project's Primary Schools:

7. Introduce annual diagnostic assessments and an in depth analysis of results in the High Schools as well. This will enable the schools to accurately identify and then target specific teaching, learning and assessment gaps, to be addressed through recommendations 4 and 5 above. Here we propose to draw on the excellent diagnostic instruments being developed by PEAS (as discussed on pages 24 – 25 of this report).

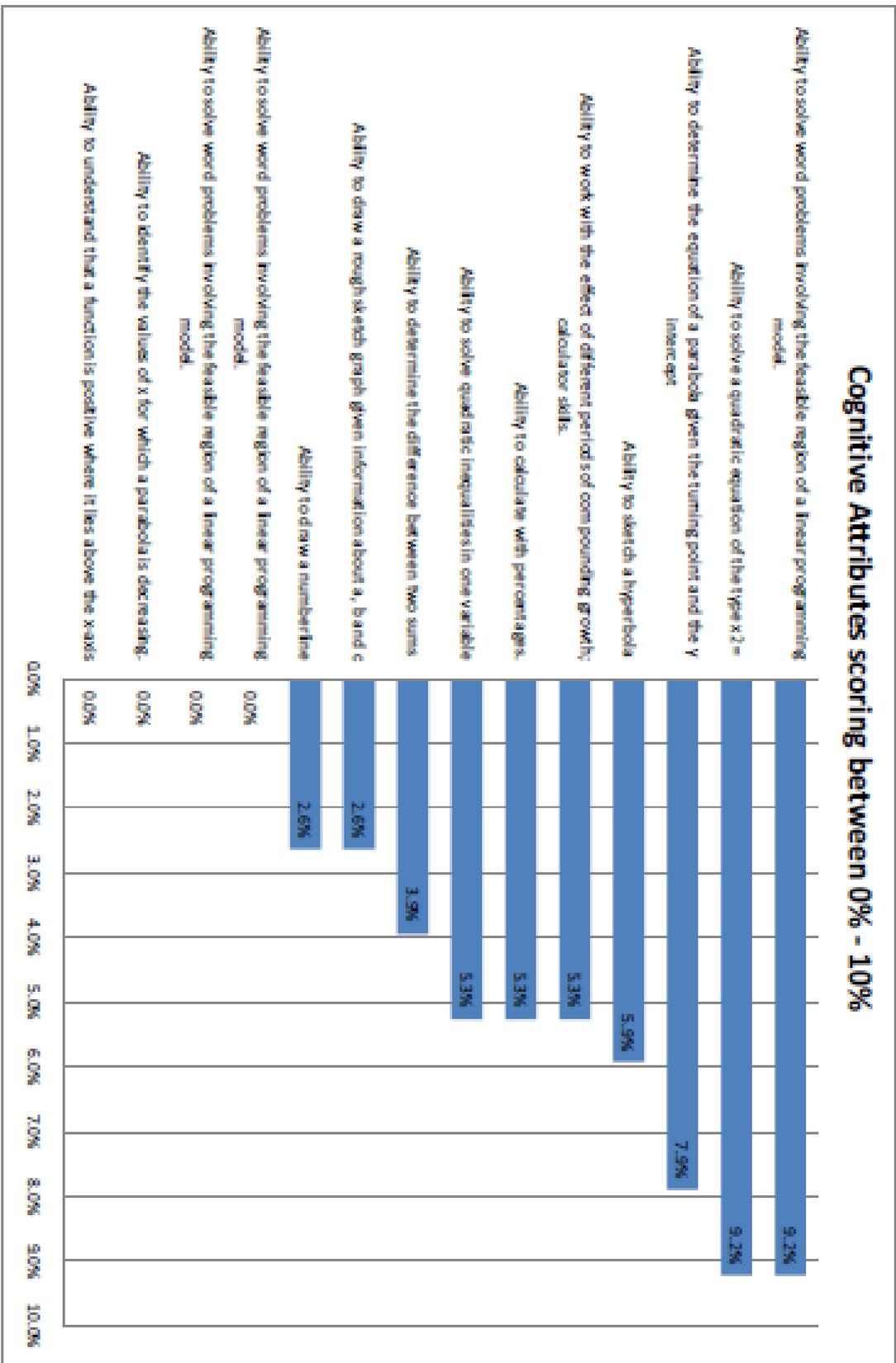
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<sup>24</sup> BICS and CALP

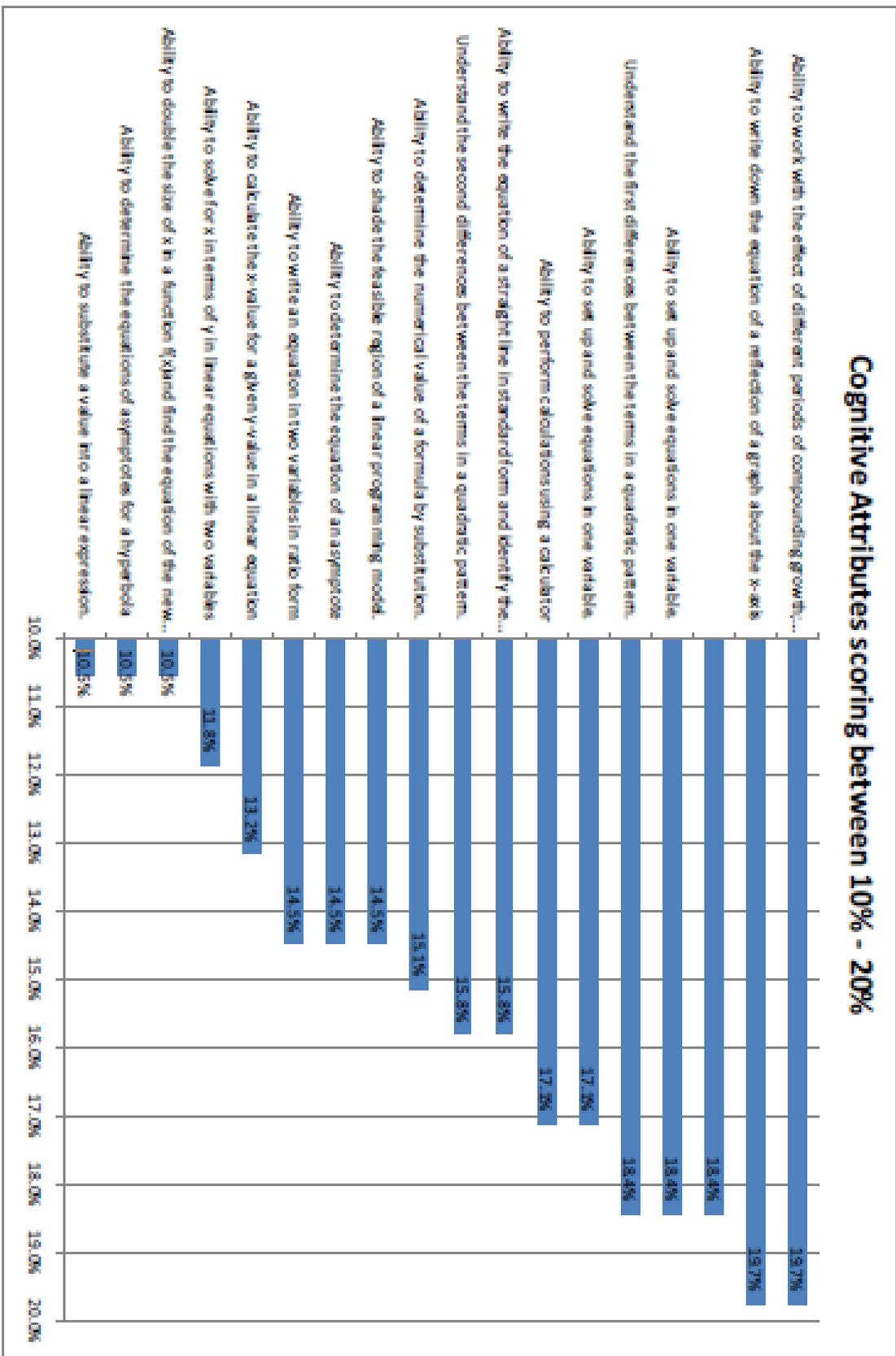
**Appendix 1**  
**Performance categories - Lutuka High, Maths**



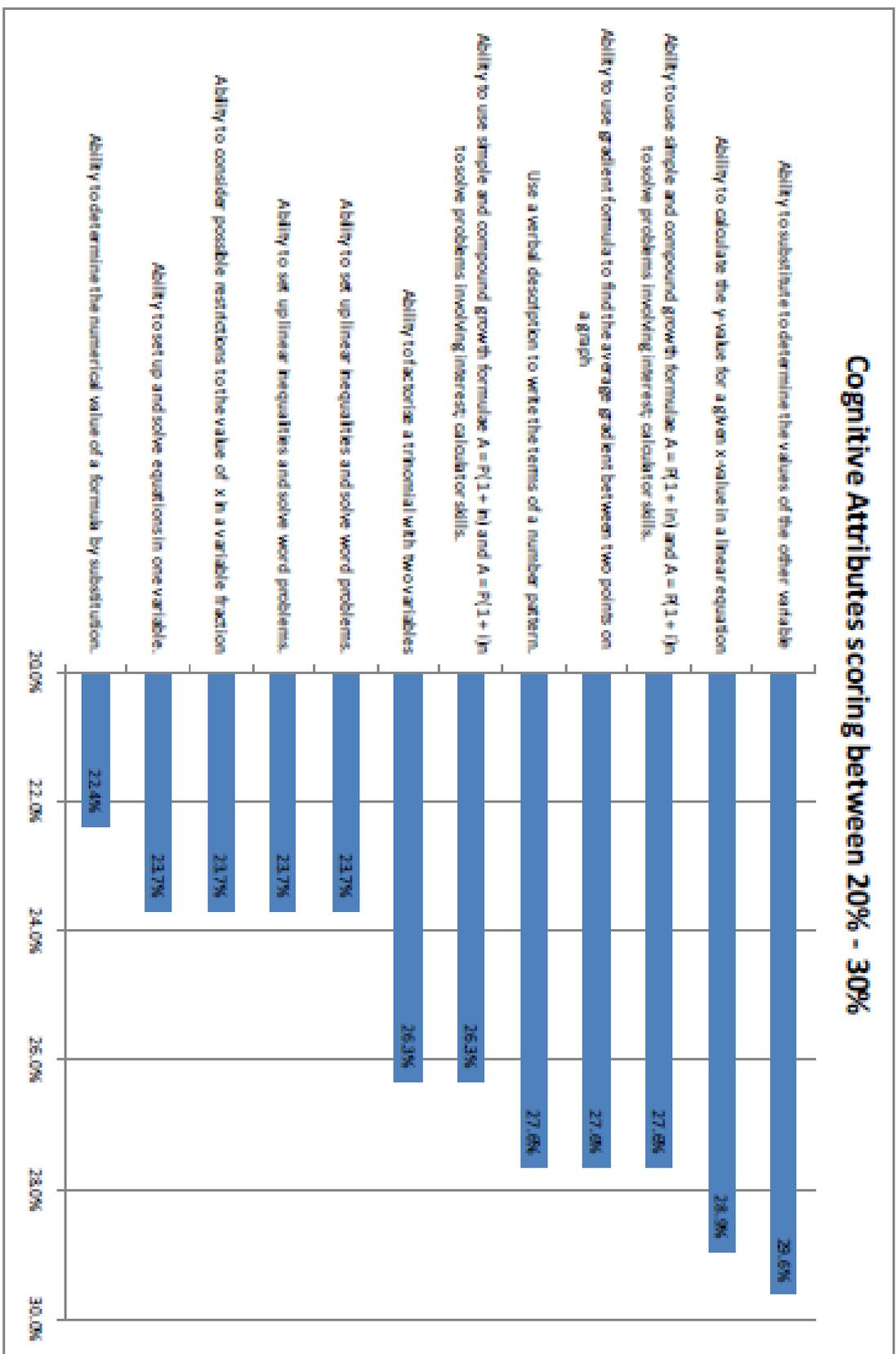
**Appendix 2**  
**Cognitive Attributes scoring between 0% - 10%**



**Appendix 3  
Cognitive Attributes scoring between 10% - 20%**



**Appendix 4**  
**Cognitive Attributes scoring between 20% - 30%**



## **Other reports on the School Development and Support Project<sup>25</sup>**

Kariem, V, & Langan, D. (April, 2009) 2008 Baseline Study Report: Towards identifying the curriculum implementation support schools need. School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V and Langan, D. (*October 2009*) What learners are not learning, why, and what to do about it: An analysis of Grade 3 and 6 Literacy and Numeracy results in 8 Primary Schools across 4 Provinces in South Africa. School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V. Langan, D and Mpofu, N. (February 2010) The impact of the School Development Project on 8 Primary Schools in year 1 of a 3-year programme. School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V, Langan, D. and Velensky, K. (March 2011) The School Support Model: Summary of trends 2008 – 2010. School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V, Langan, D and Velensky, K. (May 2011) The School Support Model: A comparative analysis - 2008 & 2010 Grade 3 and 6 Literacy and Numeracy results in 8 Primary Schools. School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V, Langan, D and Velensky, K (February 2012) Grade 3 and 6 Literacy and Numeracy results: 2008 – 2011, School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V; Langan, D and Velensky, K. (March 2012) Success stories from disadvantaged Primary Schools in the Libode, Bushbuckridge and Umzinyathi Districts, , School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Kariem, V; Langan, D and Velensky, K. (March 2012) Success stories from disadvantaged High Schools in the Libode, Tsolo, Bushbuckridge and Umzinyathi Districts, School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

Langan, D, with Kariem, N, and Velensky, K. (April 2012) Under-performing schools need district officials who can enable them to meaningfully fulfil policy expectations, School Development and Support Project, Maskew Miller Longman Foundation, Cape Town

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<sup>25</sup> For project reports, the authors are listed in alphabetical. This is to acknowledge co-authorship through the different but equal contributions made by each via the different roles each fulfils on the project. For academic papers, the academic tradition of listing the primary author first is observed.