



Working Together to Support Schools:

A Partnership between Marang Education Trust and
Metro East Education District

Dr Nadeen Moolla in collaboration with
Mr. Benjamin Schereka

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Western Cape
Government

Education

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The Marang Education Trust, in partnership with Pearson is focused on best practice as an approach to improving the quality of teaching, learning and school management in South Africa.

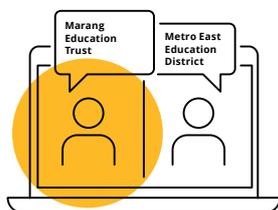
Our purpose is to contribute to the education community through direct provisioning of professional development and support and bursaries for public benefit in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

The Trust is a SACE Accredited research and professional development and support organisation which is part of Pearson South Africa's corporate social impact initiative.

Read more

Introduction

Marang Education Trust, in partnership with Pearson entered into a three-year partnership with Metro East Education District (MEED) in the Western Cape in January 2016. The district was navigating significant changes in senior leadership, so the partnership was designed to allow the Education District Office to regroup and strategise in response to the changing circumstances. Dr Nadeen Moolla, Research and Development Manager at Marang Education Trust and a registered educational psychologist, agreed to facilitate an organisation development process with MEED, employing a participatory action research approach.



The aim was to provide support at an organisational and individual level to the district office, and officials based therein, for the purposes of supporting schools more effectively. The “support” took the form of mentorship, where Dr Moolla acted as a sounding board for individuals and teams who were seeking an outsider’s perspective on issues they were grappling with. Dr Moolla’s role was instrumental in shifting and shaping practices within the district as well as documenting learnings as they related to quality support provision to schools. The partnership and the support provided by Dr Moolla emphasised the interconnection between personal and professional development, encouraging deep and critical reflection on multiple levels.

The process began with a series of interviews which identified strengths within the district and also revealed key areas requiring support. These included:



Collaboration

within and across components and role clarification



Performance as key

setting goals and monitoring performance



Personal development

relationships and values clarification



Leadership and change

leadership styles and setting expectations



Communication

what and how information flows

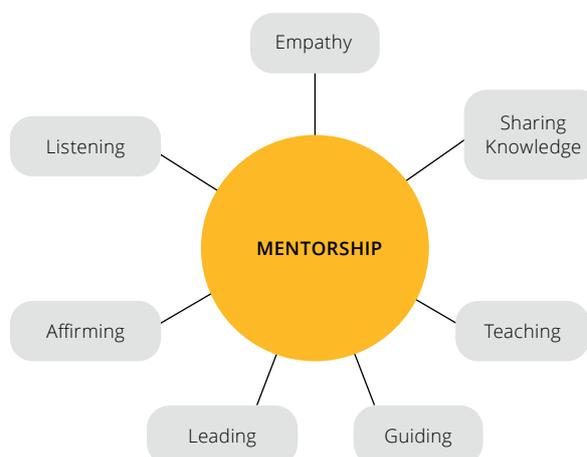


Structures and Procedures

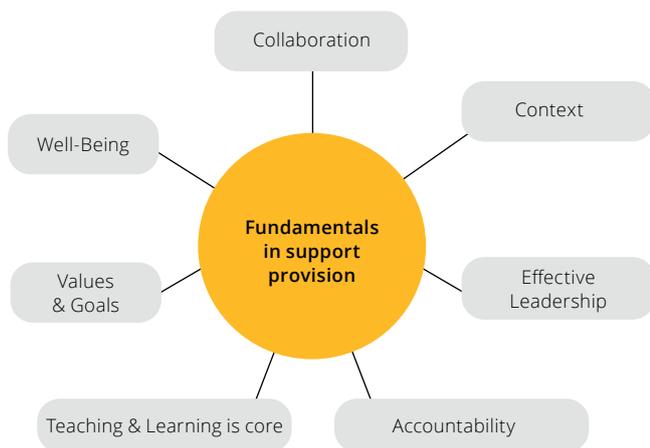
need for review

As a consequence of this process, courageous conversations and structured group processes were facilitated to clarify values and goals, open up lines of communication, strengthen relationships, enhance collaboration, establish structures and procedures, and shift leadership styles.

Central to the developmental process was an openness to mentorship. District officials at various levels in the system were open to engaging in courageous conversations that required self-reflection at individual and organisational levels. Mentorship is only truly effective when all participants are prepared to invest in the process in a transparent and holistic manner. This is the key to successful change management. Dr Moolla modelled an interaction that district officials realised was needed in their interactions with principals and educators in schools.



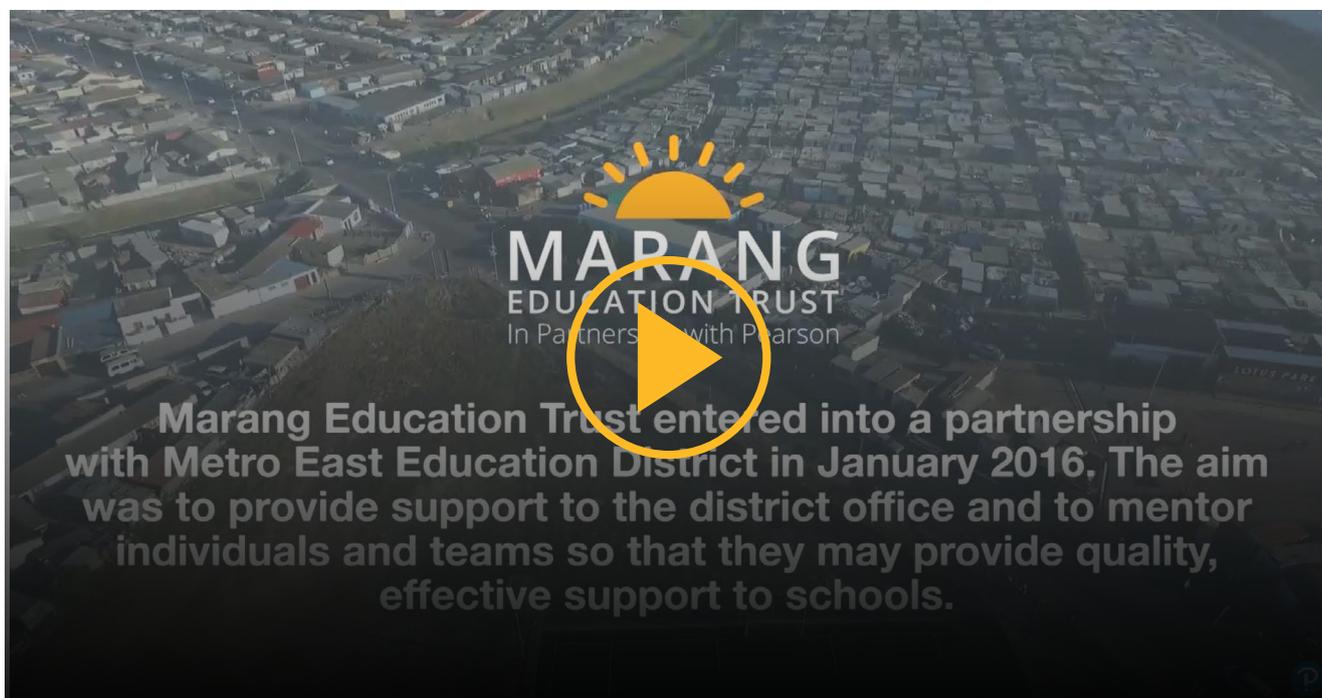
Characteristics of effective mentorship



Fundamentals in district support provision to schools

The partnership was a developmental journey which revealed certain fundamentals that district officials argued are at the core of quality service provision to schools. It became evident through the partnership engagements that certain fundamentals drive quality support provision to schools. It was agreed that districts that provide quality support ought to:

- craft common values and shared goals
- insist on effective, dynamic leadership
- regard accountability as imperative
- view teaching and learning as core
- be committed to collaboration and co-operation
- understand that context matters
- prioritise well-being.



This report captures the reflections, learnings and insights that emerged through the engagement with and within the district over a period of three years. The report emphasises what may be regarded as fundamentals that ought to drive district support provision to schools, and thus dedicates a separate section to each of the fundamentals outlined above. Each section outlines key themes that emerged as significant findings in the partnership process. Participants identified factors that district officials ought to consider when mapping support to schools at micro- and macro levels. These factors are captured as reflections, learnings, guidelines or tips from district officials at MEED, in the hope that these lessons will prove useful to other colleagues across the country.

FUNDAMENTALS IN SUPPORT PROVISION TO SCHOOLS

DEVELOPING SHARED VALUES AND GOALS

“Values start with me. I have a responsibility to look towards others, my motivation, my intention, my plan is to see how I can serve, how I can make a contribution to the other.”

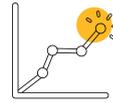
(Circuit Manager)



In the beginning, the partnership focused on understanding where the district was at, and where it wanted to go to. Conversations were designed to gain clarity around the values that were embedded in the organisation and its emerging practices. These values and practices often concurred, but were at times contradictory. A complex process of clarifying values at personal and organisational levels was engaged in. District officials at MEED participated in a process that culminated in the development of six strategic goals which were consolidated and subsequently redefined as operational plans that then drove district support activities. These strategic goals, which are presented below, served as a 'map' for the district and all who work with and within it.



Cultivate an environment of humanity and care across the district



Accomplish improved academic targets



Effectively support learners experiencing barriers to learning



Effectively support an enabling environment for quality teaching and learning



Enhance internal organisational functioning at the district



Create opportunities to engage and collaborate with key stakeholders and partners.

Metro East Education District: Strategic goals 2017-2020

Although strategic goals are often listed separately when documented, it is important to note that they are indeed interconnected, and also connected to the provincial vision and values set by the Western Cape Education Department, as depicted below.

OUR CORE VALUES
These values are our guiding principles for what we stand for and believe in.

- Caring** (C): To care for those we serve and work with.
- Competence** (Co): The ability and capacity to do the job we were employed to do.
- Accountability** (A): We take responsibility.
- Integrity** (I): To be honest and do the right thing.
- Innovation** (In): To be open to new ideas and develop creative solutions to problems in a resourceful way.
- Responsiveness** (R): To serve the needs of our citizens and employees.

Western Cape Government Education



Central to clarification and development of values and goals within the district are three issues. Firstly transparency, second, goals need to be shared and values common to all and third, engagement around these must be heightened in order to facilitate ownership.

Aspects central to the development of values and goals

Transparency

- Education district offices are large, complex organisations, often characterised by strict lines of hierarchy that determine power, authority, and communication dynamics. Finding ways to engage all stakeholders is crucial, but often not an easy task.
- Effort must be invested to ensure transparency, and in so doing, to build trust within the organisation.

Common values and goals

- The values that drive an organisation are fueled by the values held by individuals. As a circuit manager remarked, “Values start with me!” Once values are mapped and clarified in the team, it becomes possible to craft a set of goals out of these.
- As a start, these values need to be collectively understood, shared, and owned in order for a set of common goals to emerge.
- There are often different perspectives about what the district should do. Once there is a shared understanding of what the district’s strategic goals are, it becomes easier for these to be operationalised and consequently achieved.

Ownership and Engagement

- Visionary leaders develop strategic and operational plans by engaging in processes that are transparent, consultative and honest. This facilitates collective understanding and ownership from the formulation to the implementation of such plans.
- MEED achieved this by scheduling quarterly meetings with the Broad Management Team to facilitate supportive, critical interactions between and within the various components.
- “Community meetings” which involved every employee in the district provided a space for sharing ideas, values and goals, and the ownership thereof.
- Principals were also consulted so that they were aware of the strategic goals which would solidify the district’s mandate to provide efficient and effective support to schools.

In essence, transparent conversations allow for common values and goals to be clarified. Ongoing and authentic engagement around these ensures ownership thereof, and when values and goals are owned, they live and breathe in organisations and thus give life to the practices that emerge from it.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

"A leader ignites fire in people – makes them believe that they can do the job."

(Circuit Manager)



Education District Offices were established within the Department of Basic Education to lead and manage support provision to schools. District officials are tasked to lead schools in their mission to provide quality education to all learners. This requires a display of effective leadership marked by competence and confidence, a demonstration of vision and inspiration matched by structured management, and an action reflection approach. Effective leaders must also be seen to be facilitating effective communication.

Aspects central to the effective leadership

Position and Practice

- Leadership is about position, and it is also about practice. It is often assumed that leadership comes with the post one holds, but leadership is also about how one behaves.
- Effective leaders do not need to rely on their status and rank. Their leadership emerges in their values, attitudes and ethics - in the ways in which they interact and engage.
- An effective leader is a positive role model. People often learn more through what they experience and observe in a leader, than from what they are instructed to do. Instruction alone is often insufficient and even ineffective.

Competence and Confidence

- Effective leadership emanates from competence and confidence. Neither are guaranteed when individuals are appointed into positions. This makes the continuous professional development of district officials imperative, including induction, ongoing professional development and mentorship.
- Leaders need to have high expectations of themselves and of those they lead. This communicates to others that one believes in them, it inspires and gives hope.
- Effective leaders are comfortable to let go. They are confident enough to trust others to do what needs to be done, so they delegate with authority and support.

Leadership and Management

- Many district officials struggle to embrace the roles of both leader and manager. In order to be effective in one's role, one needs to lead with vision and inspiration, however, one must also manage people and organisations by providing structure and ensuring action.
- Leaders must give direction to the team, because if they want people to follow them, they need to show them the map.
- District officials often lean toward management as a stronger skills set and often because job descriptions dictate this too. This results in the role and practices being somewhat unbalanced and therefore seemingly incomplete. The reality is that both are important, because different situations call for different responses, and each individual needs to be able to read situations and know when to lead and when to manage.

Communication

- Communication is not just about what is said, but also, and perhaps more importantly, about how things are said. Communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, face-to-face or electronic, in an email or WhatsApp, or on paper in a newsletter, needs to be thoughtful, sensitive, informative and intelligent.
- How one communicates has the power to do great good and also intense harm.
- Communication is central to effective leadership because it influences every interaction and consequently, every relationship.
- Communication signals value and affirmation. When one communicates with someone in a meaningful way it tells them that they matter.
- Communication needs to be regular, transparent, consultative and honest.

Reflective Practice

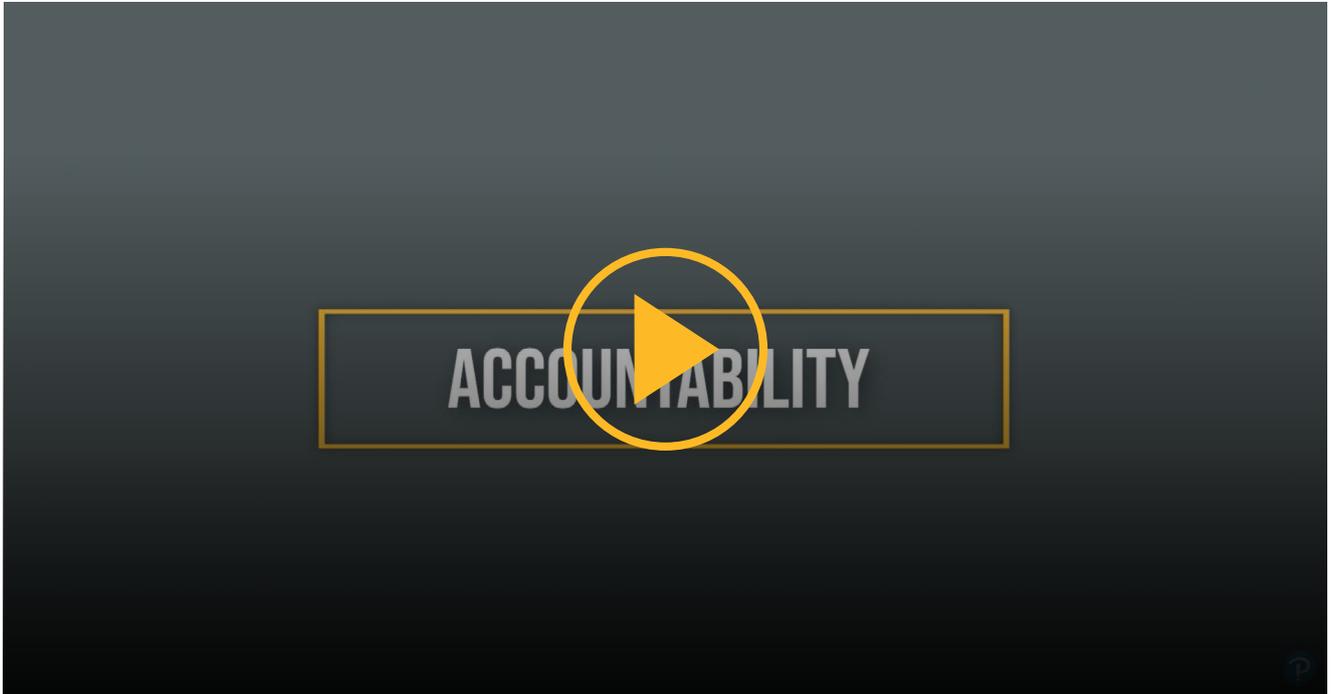
- Effective leaders are reflective practitioners. They adopt an approach that demands critical reflection on plans, policies, protocols and processes as these are implemented. They are constantly searching for what works and also for ways to improve.
- As such, strong leaders will invest constant effort in acknowledging successes, and identifying aspects that require review and shifts.
- Support to schools was found to be more effective when district officials took time to pause - daily, weekly, monthly, at the end of each quarter - to look back, in order to move forward.

District officials lead and manage principals and teachers, who in turn, are the leaders and managers in the schools. Principals and teachers need to be inspired, they need to be able to learn how to be reflective, accountable, competent and confident. They can do this by observing good leadership in action, which leaves district officials tasked with the responsibility of modelling effective leadership in their practice with care and consistency.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

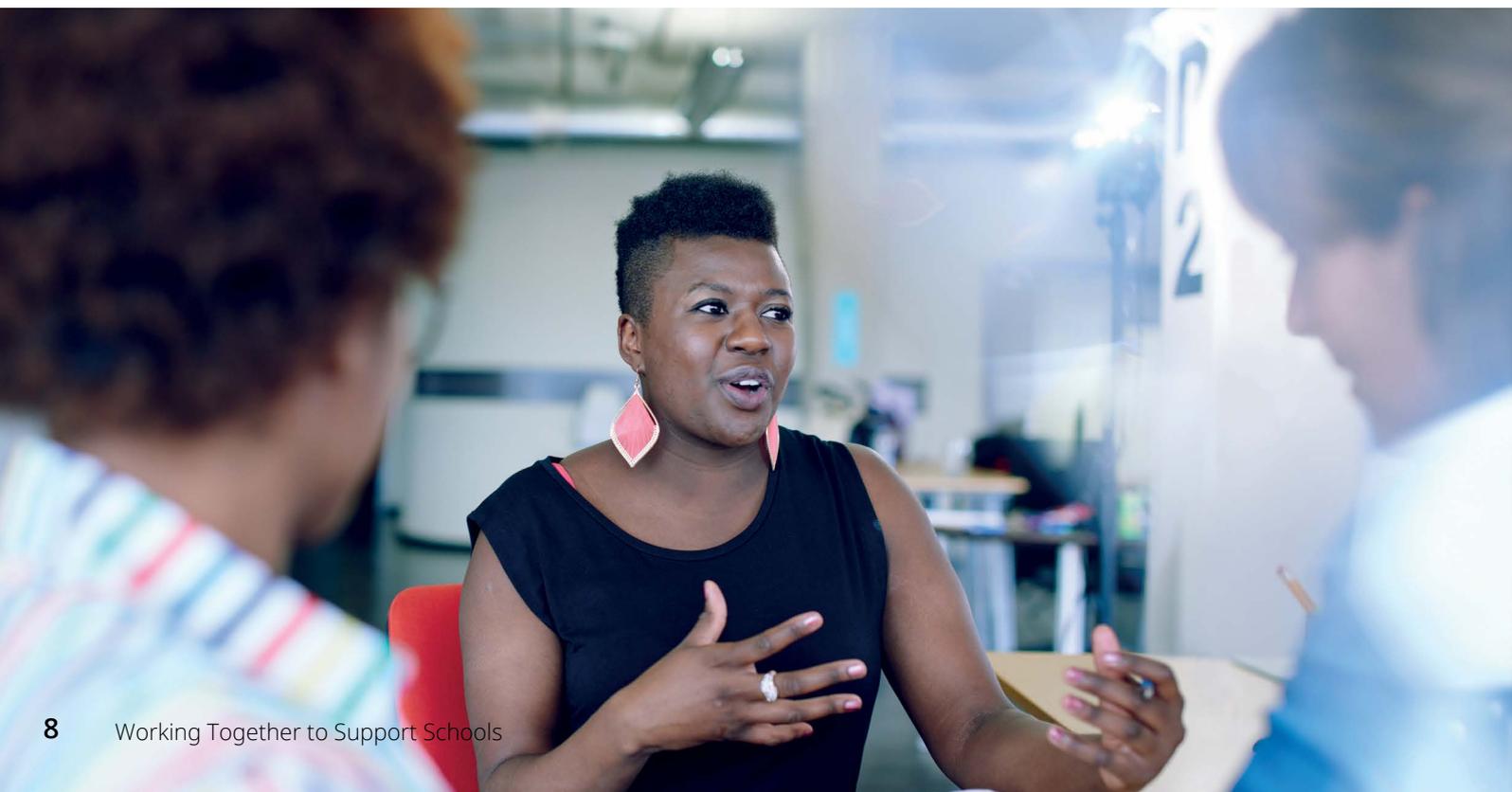
"There is a balance needed between supporting and holding people to account."

(Circuit Manager)



Accountability is about following through on tasks; it is about meeting expectations that are set and fulfilling commitments that are made. The success of a system relies on the accountability of all stakeholders. Everyone needs to acknowledge their role in making a system work, and to act accordingly. The demand for accountability extends to all, including district officials, principals, teachers, learners, parents, community organisations and government structures. So nobody is exempt.

It is important to differentiate between accountability and compliance. Providing support and guidance is a prerequisite to holding people to account. However, once goals are set, these must be monitored and evaluated.



Aspects central to ensuring accountability

NOT Compliance

- Being accountable is not the same as being compliant.
- Compliance is about ticking boxes with little consideration given to the quality and efficacy of a product or task. Accountability, however, communicates ownership, understanding, responsibility, participation, co-operation and commitment to quality.
- One needs to facilitate the shift away from checks and compliance. Schools need to begin to act, not with compliance, but with integrity; to fulfil tasks through quality engagement and interaction.
- Accountability, as opposed to compliance, emerges when the relationship between districts and schools is perceived as supportive and developmental.

Support and Guidance

- District officials cannot just focus on accountability if they have not guided and supported the people they work with.
- In order to hold people accountable, district officials need to motivate and inspire, to become a source of hope.
- Accountability is facilitated when the strongest message that schools receive is that the district exists as a support structure. If support rather than reprimand is what schools identify as the district's primary purpose, then we are well on our way to achieving quality in the education sector.
- Being supportive and empathic is important, however, ensuring that responsibilities are fulfilled and individuals are held accountable is equally important at all levels of the system.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Accountability is driven by a monitoring process which relies on evidence. Monitoring and evaluation needs to be sensitive and transparent, but rigorous too.
- Data collection is therefore crucial. It foregrounds administrative tasks which are often regarded as time wasters or distractors, but this remains key because, without records, there is no evidence of efficacy.
- Without accurate data collection, data analysis is flawed and consequent recommendations for change and improvement remain vague and even unhelpful.
- The reality is that 'what gets measured gets done'. So setting targets and then monitoring and evaluating them is key.

The desire to nurture, sustain and maintain relationships sometimes suppresses the responsibility to hold people accountable. District officials must strike a balance in this regard. One must take care not to shift the focus or the goal in one's efforts to be sensitive and compassionate because the district remains accountable for delivering services to schools; and schools remain accountable to do their very best to provide quality education.

SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING

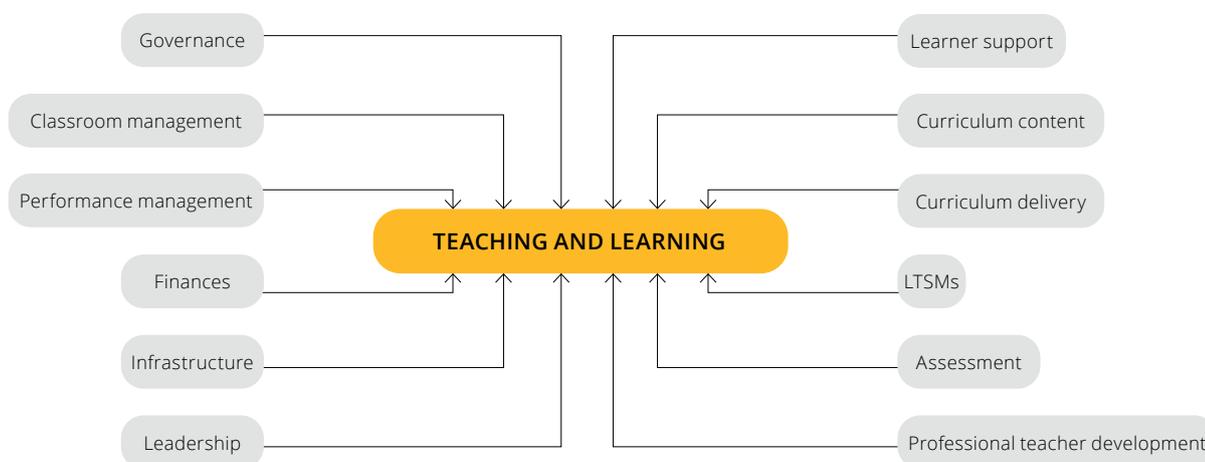
“Teaching and learning is our core business; it is what education is all about.”

(Circuit Manager)



Teaching and learning is the core business of the school, and therefore must be regarded as the core business of the district. Although it may not be the only area of focus, teaching and learning is the centre towards which all else must point.

Everybody in the district has a responsibility to see to the provision of quality education. All components need to ensure that quality is being delivered in the classroom, by impacting directly or indirectly on teaching and learning.



All district officials should contribute to teaching and learning

What happens in the classroom often tells the most important story in a school. What is taught, how it is taught, what materials are used, what assessments are employed, how teachers and learners engage, and how motivated teachers and learners are.– This is what helps us to make judgments about the quality of education provided in a school. So these are the aspects which districts need to influence.

Aspects central to supporting teaching and learning

Content

- Subject advisors play a crucial role in ensuring that teachers teach the right content at the right level.
- Although driven by CAPS, the content must remain relevant to the context within which learners live and learn.
- It is no secret that learners are struggling with Languages and Mathematics across the grades in our country. So this must be a priority.
- There is also a strong call for holistic education which facilitates the development of learners in all aspects, including art, drama, sport and music.
- It must be understood that teaching and learning encompasses far more than curriculum coverage in the classroom and assessment in tests and examinations. Teaching and learning must include what lies beyond the formal curriculum.



Pedagogy

- Teachers also require guidance regarding teaching methods and strategies, with an emphasis on developing independent and critical thinkers.
- Learner-centred teaching must be prioritised with practical, hands-on approaches at the forefront.
- Teaching strategies must encourage the effective use of language by encouraging learners to engage in discussions that extend and deepen knowledge production.
- Lessons must be planned well, incorporating high expectations of learners and increased levels of positive and encouraging engagement between all role players in the classroom setting.



Learning and Teaching Support Materials

- Districts are responsible for ensuring the procurement of LTSMs when these are requested by schools.
- The e-Portal gives teachers and learners access to high quality, comprehensive resources. These include lesson plans, revision packs and e-books.
- Accessibility is, however, more than physical access which involves the click of a button or signing delivery notes. LTSMs need to be mediated by district officials to ensure that teachers use these effectively in the teaching and learning process.

Addressing Diversity

- Teachers need to address diversity by acknowledging that learners have different interests, learning preferences, abilities and needs.
- Districts play a crucial role in helping schools and teachers to establish structures and procedures that ensure that no child is left behind.
- The content that is taught, the pedagogy employed and the products that emerge in the assessment process must be carefully differentiated.
- The classroom as a learning environment must accommodate diversity and acknowledge barriers to learning that may exist.
- Identifying learners who experience barriers to learning is only the first step.
- 'At risk' learners must be identified and teachers then guided regarding the implementation of appropriate interventions at micro (one-on-one) and macro (e.g. winter school) levels.



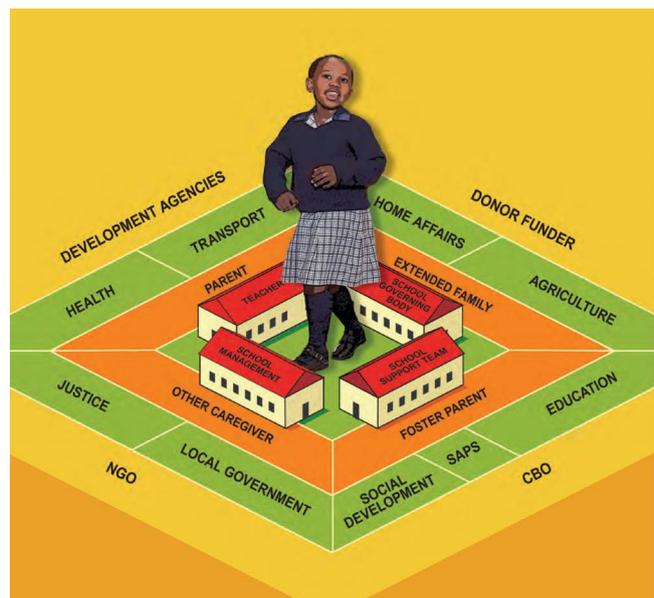
Co-ordinated support for teachers

- Support in the classroom is not 'one size fits all'.
- After careful analysis of relevant data, district officials are able to develop a subject support strategy and a subject improvement plan that is unique to each school.
- School visits include support in the form of team teaching, demo lessons, classroom observation and feedback discussions with individuals and teams.

Content, pedagogy and teaching resources are the essence of what teachers need to focus on. They however also have an obligation to ensure that impact holistically on children's development and that no child is left behind. In order to reach all learners, they need to be inclusive in their approach and in their interactions. Fulfilling these roles is complex and intricate, so teachers rely on district officials to provide quality, tailored support to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.

What matters most about education is that learners must be the ones who ultimately gain. Whatever happens in the school, and especially what happens in the classroom, must benefit learners. This is what makes teaching and learning core – it is what is taught and how it is taught that is at the heart of the matter. District officials at MEED were thus challenged to critically reflect on the role that they play in driving teaching and learning by reviewing how they impact as individuals and teams on the schools that they support.

EDUCATING CHILDREN HOLISTICALLY: DBE VISION

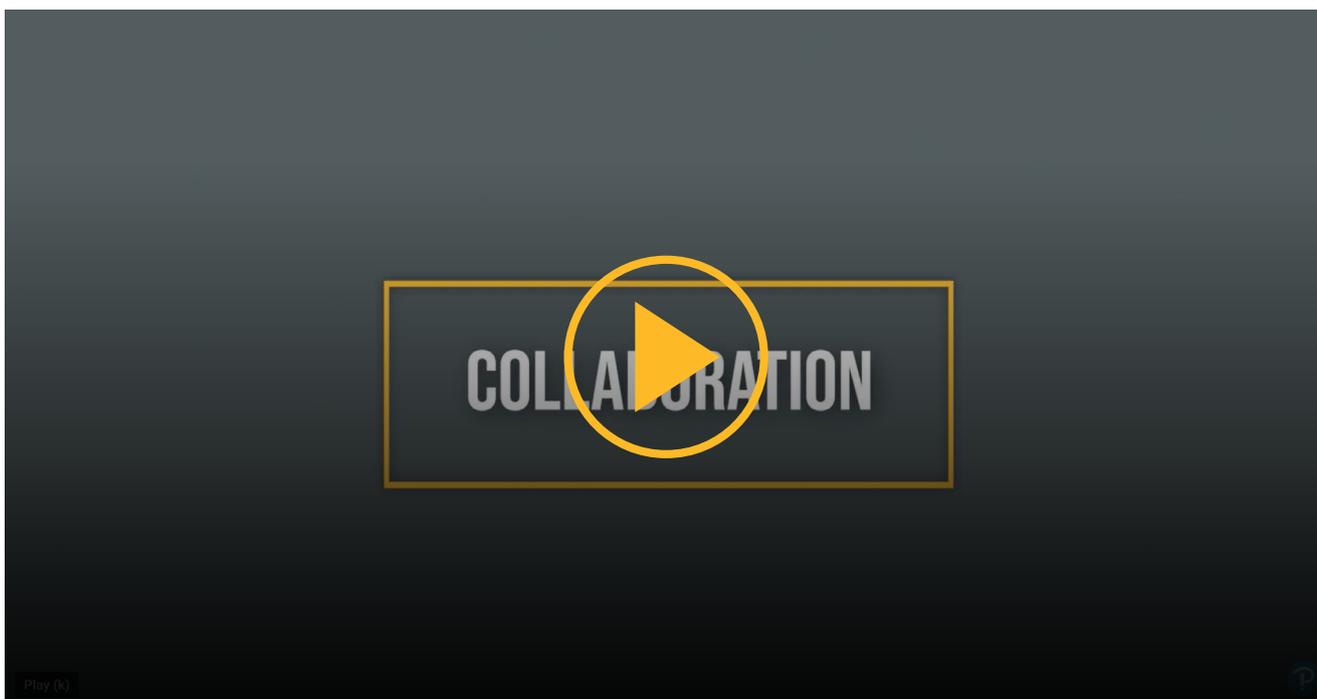


DBE Policy: Care and Support for teaching and Learning

ENHANCING COLLABORATION

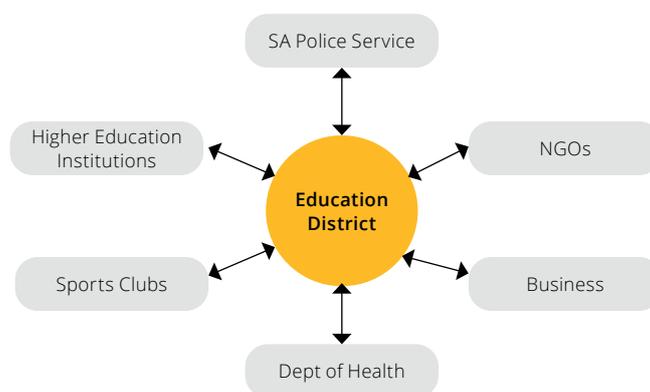
"We value each other's expertise; we hold each other in higher esteem. We understand each other's challenges better because we have allowed ourselves to open up and not work in silos like we used to."

(Head of ECD)



Collaboration is an interactive process that brings together that which is diverse, to execute plans for common goals and to generate solutions for complex problems. It draws together different sectors, disciplines and professions that agree to work together in a co-operative way. Collaboration is most successful when each stakeholder brings a different set of resources or skills, recognising the value of diversity in achieving success.

Collaboration should take place at multiple levels, in particular between the district and external stakeholders who influence education. Working with other sectors like SAPS, Departments of Health and Social Development and Municipalities is crucial. Meeting with these sectors creates goodwill and serves as a gateway to the communities that Education District Office serves.

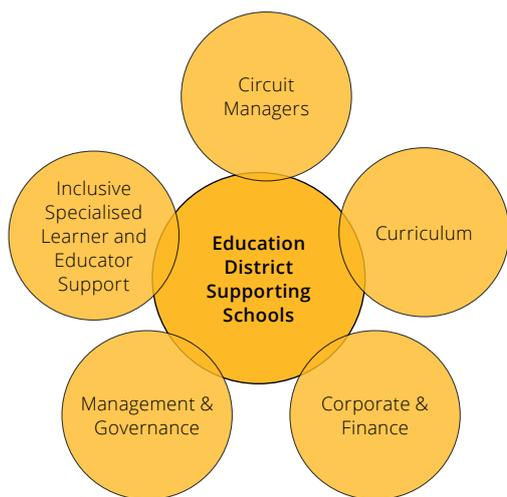


Opportunities for collaboration between the district officials and external stakeholders

“The Education Department will never be able to deliver quality education on its own. There are too many nuances, too many deliverables, too many influences. So we need to reach out to credible partners.”

(District Director)

Collaboration within the district, between various components is equally important.



Once common goals have been set by all in the district, it is imperative that the different components find ways to collaborate to achieve them. Working in silos results in duplication or slippages that often frustrate and even incapacitate schools, the very institutions that districts are meant to support.

Various components comprising the district office

Collaboration has multiple benefits, but requires a focus on soft skills as well as hard issues in order to be deemed successful. Intersectoral collaboration requires effort and consideration, where structures and processes need to be planned and co-ordinated. Roles must be clarified with an appreciation of diversity and relationships need to be characterised by trust, respect, co-operation and sharing. Logistically, collaboration has the potential to decrease administrative workloads, allow for co-facilitation of workshops, integration and team-teaching in demo lessons, and joint feedback meetings to teachers and School Management teams (SMTs).



Aspects central to enhancing collaboration

Planning and Co-ordination

- Collaboration is wonderful when it happens automatically, naturally and even instinctively. However, organisations cannot rely on chance and good favour, collaboration needs to be structured, organised and managed.
- Collaboration requires planning and co-ordination and relies on participants' willingness to invest time, expertise and resources for its success.
- One key aspect is effective communication, which involves the development and strengthening of structures and procedures that facilitate communication and ensure collaboration at a deep level. At MEED, learning support advisors and subject advisors meet on a quarterly basis to plan support provision to Foundation phase teachers.
- These structured spaces allow for collective planning and problem-solving to take place.

Clarifying roles

- Collaboration requires a clear understanding of identities, roles and responsibilities since there is often contestation about territories and contributions.
- It is important to identify where roles are similar, because it is this 'overlapping' area which can be a source of tension if individuals become territorial. The commonality can, however, also be a source of cohesion if opportunities to work as a team are exploited in these instances.
- When roles are clear, collaboration that is authentic becomes more possible.
- At MEED, Learning Support Advisors and Subject Advisors clarified their roles, identifying areas of difference, as well as areas of overlap. This facilitated allocation of tasks and joint planning around activities that could be shared to avoid duplication.

Valuing diversity

- An understanding and appreciation of the value of diversity is at the heart of the matter. Rather than trying to make everyone be the same and do the same, there ought to be a concerted effort to identify what makes us unique.
- It is in the "coming together" of that which is diverse - different knowledge skills, talents, opinions, expertise and experiences - that innovation and creativity emerges.

Trusting Relationships

- When collaboration and teamwork is a challenge, questions need to be asked about the relationships between individuals and groups. Levels of trust need to be assessed.
- Lack of trust and interpersonal conflict or tension interferes with professional practice and consequently impacts on the quality of support provided to schools.
- Sharing good practice, as well as challenges, allows colleagues to learn from others' successes and also to teach and support where colleagues need assistance. However, being able to learn from others requires a relationship that is built on trust.
- Meaningful collaboration relies on quality relationships, and trust is at the heart of this. Barriers need to be broken down and silences intruded upon.

Co-operation and Sharing

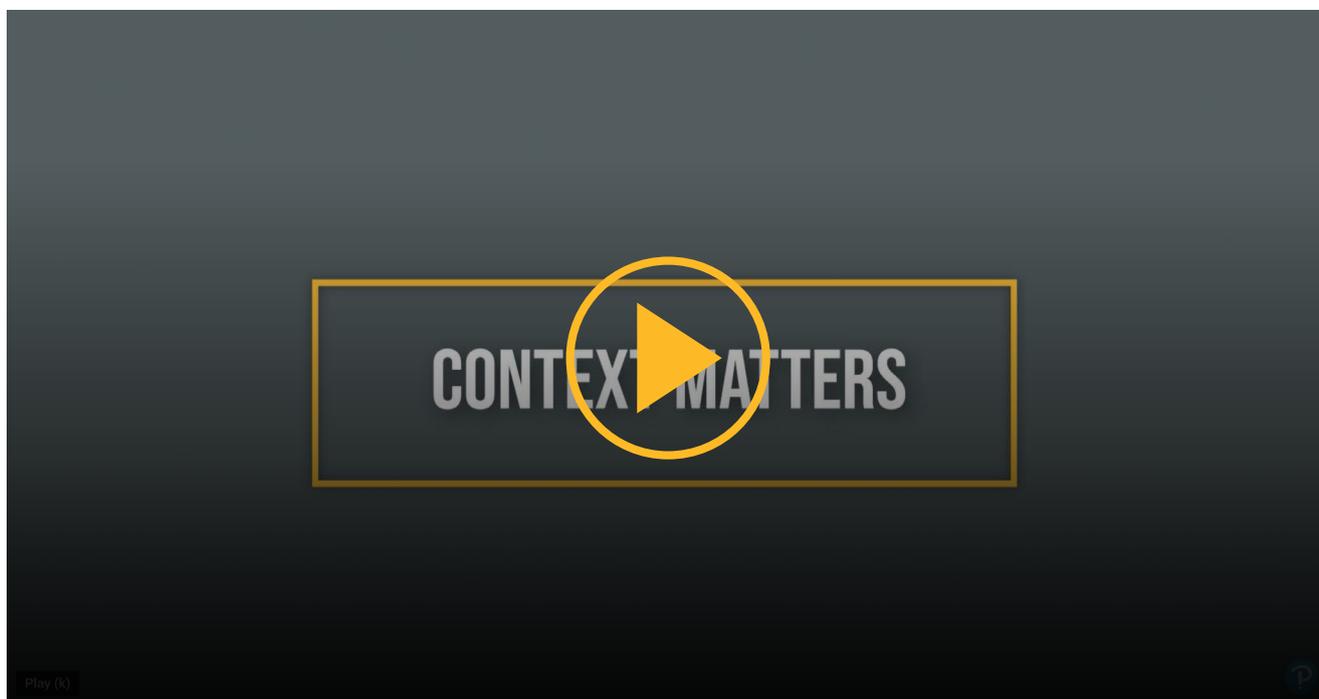
- It is important to break down the 'silo mentality'. Individuals and teams need to realise that working together is far more effective than working separately.
- Components within the district must see the value that others bring. Different perspectives, varied knowledge, expertise, and skills, once pooled, make for potent interventions that have the potential to facilitate significant change and make meaningful impact.
- Forums for collaboration need to be created. Circuit managers could form a community of practice which can be a vibrant, creative, innovative problem-solving space. A space where circuit managers are able to strategise collectively so that support is implemented systematically and consistently across the district.
- At MEED "Round Robin" meetings are scheduled. These are structured opportunities for different components within the district to meet and discuss schools, to share practices and to understand and address challenges by collectively generating solutions.

Collaboration must be planned and co-ordinated if maximum benefit is to be derived from it. Role clarification is crucial since it will facilitate an appreciation for diversity and the impact thereof on the efficacy of support provision. The power of the personal, and its impact on the professional is felt if trust is lacking between professionals, components and teams. Once trust and respect for diversity and difference is entrenched, co-operation becomes easy, even automatic. Sharing practices and solutions comes naturally in an organisation where trust is central to the culture of the organisation.

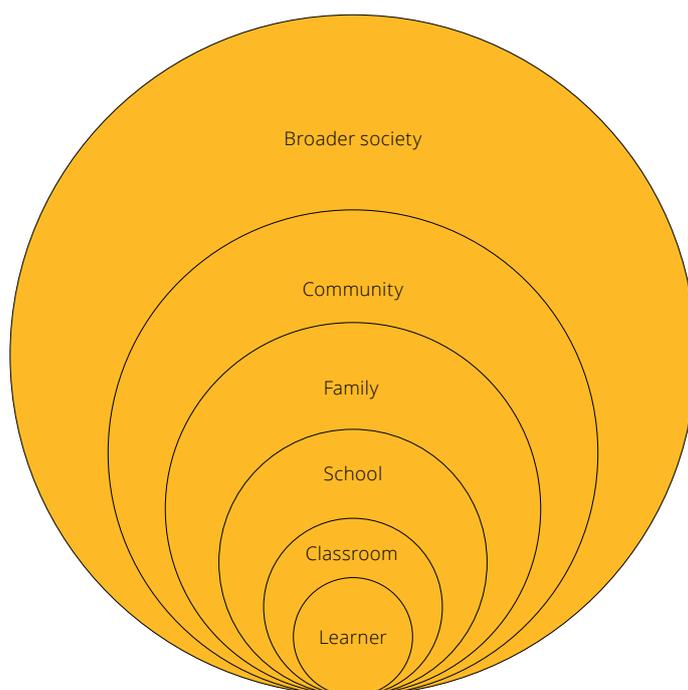
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

"Context does matter!"

(Circuit Manager)



Schools are not isolated entities. They are systems that form part of an intricate web that is interconnected with and influenced by multiple factors and other systems. The community which learners live in, which the school serves, impacts significantly on the provision of quality education. Schools are trying to be safe havens in a challenging environment.



Schools as part of a nested system.

Contextual issues like poverty, violence and crime present as serious challenges to schools and districts. These factors influence the nature and focus of support provided to schools and are expounded upon forthwith.

Aspects central to understanding the context

Poverty

- Nutrition is a priority in the district because, for some children, the school is the only place where they receive a meal each day. Poverty is a stark reality.
- No fee schools simply do not have any extra funds to invest in various aspects of the school. This impacts on the ability to provide quality education.
- Poorer schools cannot, for example, hire extra staff, so classes remain overcrowded, with discipline and fewer resources becoming a bigger challenge. This makes it difficult to function efficiently, to provide a meaningful learning experience.



Violence

- Far too many communities have been captured by violence, leaving people traumatised, often on a daily basis.
- A circuit manager at MEED recalls a time when, in 2018, five learners were killed in one school in four months!
- If learners and teachers do not feel safe at school, then effective teaching and learning is near impossible.



Crime

- Crime impacts on the delivery of quality education and on the provision of support to schools.
- Burglaries and vandalism impact on resources and infrastructure which are central to quality teaching and learning.
- District officials often feel unsafe going to schools. So although they are committed to development and support, the context they work in feels physically unsafe and even dangerous.



Impact on support

- The context determines what support is provided as well as how this support is provided. Understanding the context beyond the school is crucial because it shapes the support required by and offered to schools.
- Not all schools require interventions to address poverty, substance abuse, learner pregnancy, gang violence and community unrest. The context dictates the specific response.
- Districts need collaboration with organisations that are genuinely interested in the delivery of education and who are biased towards the poor and marginalized in our communities.
- Although the contextual challenges sometimes leaves district officials feeling paralysed, it is crucial to note that the socio-economic status of a school does not preclude the need for support; it simply takes a different form or focus.



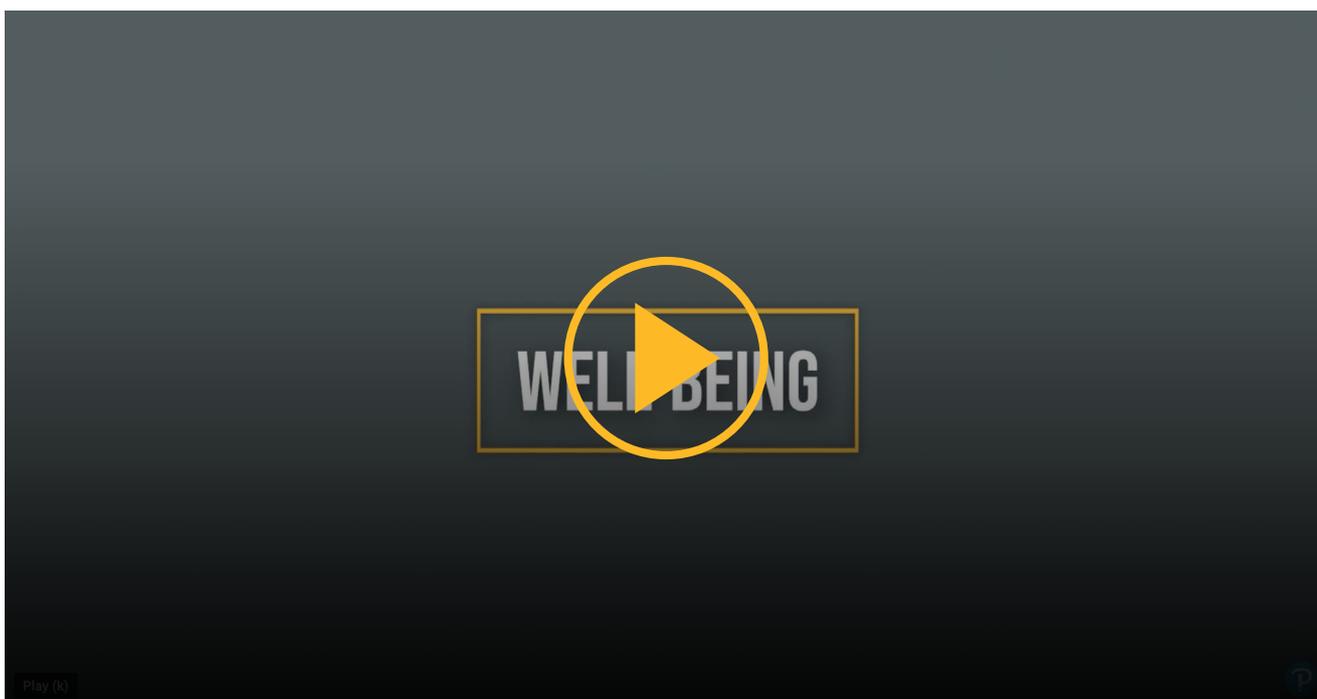
It is clear that context does matter. Whether schools are wealthy or poor, in urban or rural settings, well-resourced or impoverished, the context impacts on the ability of district officials to provide support. Support, however, needs to be focused where change is possible, since some issues are beyond the district's locus of control. Courage, creativity and commitment is what is required if one is to make a difference in these difficult conditions.

All the schools in a district are not the same. This makes a 'one size fits all' approach to support unfeasible and ineffective. District officials ought to therefore take cognisance of the contextual factors that have the potential to impact positively or negatively on education provision in schools. Housing, unemployment, nutrition, infrastructure, safety and recreation are some of the aspects that need to be considered when education districts plan and implement support interventions with schools.

ACKNOWLEDGING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

We display our humanity towards one another, we respect one another, we are sincere towards one another - everyone is an important cog in this machinery."

(Circuit Manager)



Emotional well-being is characterised by a stable mood and the ability to experience, manage and express emotions in a meaningful way. It encompasses acceptance of self and others, a positive outlook and a sense of contentment or freedom from worry. Central to this understanding is that emotional well-being embraces both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects.

Emotional well-being is important in education because teaching, learning and development are processes that are grounded in the 'person'. These processes rely on engagement at the level of self or other. The more grounded one is in oneself, and in relation to others, the more successful the teaching, learning and development process is likely to be.

Facilitating professional development is generally regarded as a priority for district officials. This is understood. However, the importance of personal development within this should not be understated. What emerged through the partnership was how important attending to the personal, to individuals and to relationships was, in order to gain maximum benefit in professional development and support interventions. To this end, Strategic goal 1 at MEED focused specifically on the importance of emotional well-being, especially in the expression of care for oneself and others.

"Let our humanity shine through" is central to our core set of values. It is envisaged that our engagements with all role players and clients will reflect that we are caring, respectful and courteous civil servants who earnestly strive to improve the educational outcomes of all learners in this beautiful country of ours.

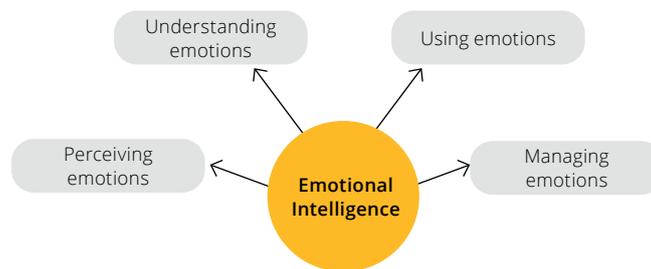
Preamble of Strategic Plan 2017-2020, Metro East Education District.

Central to acknowledging emotional well-being is being emotionally intelligent where there is clear acknowledgement and affirmation of both intrapersonal as well as interpersonal aspects of our engagements. Being able to provide support through mentorship provides a meaningful and authentic opportunity to integrate personal and professional development. It alters the perception of the district official as a support provider in the system.

Aspects central to acknowledging well-being

Emotional Intelligence

- Awareness and management of one's emotions and relationships is what encompasses emotional intelligence.
- Emotional intelligence is what drives emotional well-being. It is very difficult to promote well-being in an authentic way if one is not emotionally intelligent.
- Leaders hold some responsibility here. A leader's relationships with others are of paramount importance, and they also have the responsibility of monitoring relationships and facilitating healthy interactions between members of their team.
- District officials therefore need to develop their emotional intelligence in order to facilitate development and provide quality support to others.
- Teachers need to work with learners holistically too. EQ is as important as IQ!



What is emotional intelligence?

Intrapersonal

- Well-being relates to both intrapersonal and interpersonal development. It is as much about the 'self' as the 'other'.
- Intrapersonal factors include one's ability to access, understand and communicate one's own inner feelings.
- Intrapersonal wellness includes a sense of assertiveness, positive self-regard, independence and healthy self-esteem.
- When individuals are emotionally intelligent they contribute meaningfully to organisational well-being because they are aware of their own emotions and are able to manage themselves and others with understanding.



Interpersonal

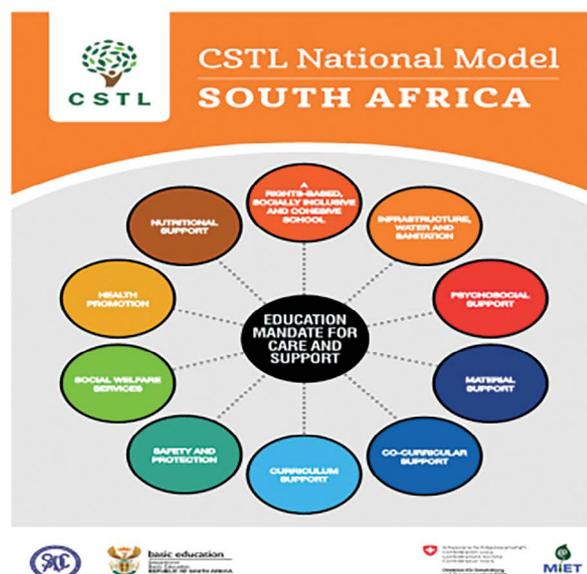
- The interpersonal refers to relationships, including group dynamics, that is, how teams function.
- Team activities that are fun, but also incorporate deep reflection, assist in the development of the organisation. Such activities have the capacity to reveal gaps, dynamics, tensions, and conflicts as well as provide opportunities for growth and thriving.
- It is important to encourage individuals and teams to reflect deeply on who they are, how they engage, what works well and what needs to change so that the organisation can learn in order to grow and mature.
- Recognition and valuing of all members within the team is crucial. Each person's contribution needs to be acknowledged as contributing to the whole. This draws people into a cohesive unit, doing things because they want to, not because they have to.

Mentorship

- Mentorship facilitates personal and professional well-being. It provides a safe space for individuals or teams to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation through courageous conversations.
- Such conversations have the potential to move one towards self-regulations and self-change, as one addresses personal, professional and organisational complexities that impact on who we are and how we engage in the world.
- In order to avoid a downward spiral, or remaining stuck in a problem, it is important to adopt a solution-focused approach which drives individuals, teams and consequently the organisation as a whole towards solving problems rather than becoming consumed by them.
- When things go wrong, silence should not be an option. Opportunities should be created to speak about the issues with the people involved.
- It is difficult to mentor someone if trust is lacking. So, the first level of investment by a district official when mentoring principals and teachers needs to be in establishing a relationship and developing rapport.

**NOT JUST
ABOUT
ACADEMIC
ABILITY**

DBE POLICY ON CARE & SUPPORT FOR TEACHING & LEARNING



Care and Support for Teaching and Learning: DBE policy on holistic support provision to the learner

As much as identities as professionals are important - that a mark is made on the world as teachers, principals, curriculum specialists, school psychologists or financial management experts, we are human beings first. As a consequence there is a responsibility to acknowledge, embrace and express one's sense of humanity first. Being emotionally intelligent and working with and through intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges is a primary responsibility. The expectation of the district official is to wear many hats and to lead, manage and support in many different ways, however, owning and enacting the role of mentor within these multiple identities allows one's humanity to shine through, above all else.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- Education District Offices ought to engage in transparent processes that facilitate the development of shared values and goals which are owned by all.



- District Officials need to embrace continuous professional development to increase competence and enhance confidence in their roles as reflective leaders and managers in an education system where effective communication and information flow must be regarded as a priority.



- While support provision should take precedence in the district office, effort should be invested in ensuring that all stakeholders are held accountable by employing transparent and effective monitoring and evaluation practices.



- Teaching and learning ought to be regarded as the core, and as such, co-ordinated support from district to schools needs to focus on subject content, pedagogy, learning and teaching support materials, addressing barriers to learning through inclusion.



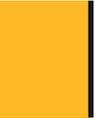
- Intersectoral collaboration should be enhanced within the district office as well as with external stakeholders, with a clear focus on role clarification, building trust, valuing diversity and facilitating co-operation and sharing in co-ordinated structures.



- Consideration ought to be given to contextual factors which influence the focus, nature and form of support provided from districts to schools.



- District Officials need to be emotionally intelligent and able to navigate both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of human interaction as they fulfil their role as mentors to educators and managers in schools with care, courtesy and respect.



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