

Case study 3

This Quintile 2 KwaZulu/Natal Primary School is in a remote area near Nquthu in the Umzinyathi District. Most of its teachers live in Dundee, about an hour from the school, while most of the learners live in the surrounding rural communities.

Widespread poverty and illiteracy

The surrounding rural communities engage mainly in traditional cattle farming and subsistence crop farming. They also depend on small incomes from family members who are migrant workers, and on state pensions and child grants. Poverty is widespread and many of the adults are illiterate. The teachers routinely contribute towards buying shoes, jerseys and windbreakers for the learners during the winter months. All of the learners are fed by the school's feeding scheme, which the school supplements with its own vegetable garden.



Poor nutrition

At this school the learners do not like weekends and holidays because they often go without food for extended periods of time. The principal has noted that after each holiday, many children exhibit signs of malnutrition, and that each term it takes about three weeks on the feeding scheme before some of the learners are able to concentrate properly during lessons.

The Principal has arranged for a mobile clinic to visit the school once a term to ensure that every child's health is monitored regularly, and to try to prevent learners from becoming too ill.

Making the most of a range of buildings

The school buildings are well maintained and include brick classrooms for the Intermediate and Senior Grades; prefabricated classrooms for the Foundation Phase Grades; and metal shed classrooms for Grades R and 1.



Inside the Grade R classroom



Inside the Grade 1 classroom



One of the brick classrooms was converted into a resource centre.

The resource centre stored textbooks, reading resources and portable science laboratories that were not being used



Limited resources

The school was first connected to the electricity grid in mid-2010, has pit toilets and one water-tap.

The feeding scheme kitchen and pit toilets



The medium of instruction challenge

- English is more like a foreign language than an additional language in this remote area
- Officials, teachers and learners are all uncomfortable, even visibly anxious, about using English; and show frustration when trying to express themselves through the medium of English
- In the Foundation Phase, Zulu speaking teachers teach mainly Sotho speaking learners from the surrounding mainly Sotho speaking communities, through the medium of Zulu
- From Grade 4 onwards, Zulu speaking teachers (who do not speak much English) try to teach mainly Sotho speaking learners (who are not exposed to much English), through the medium of English. It is probably realistic to estimate that about 70% of English medium teaching is done in Zulu.

In 2008

This school had good administrative leadership and management. In terms of general functionality, the school was well organized, well maintained and it fulfilled many of the administrative curriculum policy requirements. There was clear evidence of the principal's efforts to secure the resources and services the school needed to maintain its facilities and to care for its learners. The well maintained grounds and buildings, the productive vegetable garden and the attempt to create a resource centre, are just some examples of this school's commitment and initiative.

However, dislocations between the administrative curriculum requirements that the school was fulfilling and actual classroom practices, contributed towards the schools poor Literacy and Numeracy averages, which ranged between:

- 18 and 25% in Grade 3
- 20 and 35% in Grade 6

To improve on these results, the school needed support with:

- Curriculum planning
- Teaching and learning resources
- Meaningful curriculum implementation

By the end of 2010

A) The good administrative leadership and management continued

The school continued to initiate school improvement projects, including:

- Securely fencing the school property, developing a security area and employing a security guard and night watchman
- Securing additional library resources
- Applying for and securing a new Grade R classroom through the Department of Education's QUIDSUP project

B) There were also new signs of improved curriculum implementation

Teachers experimented with mediation and facilitation in addition to transmission



C) There were also clear signs of improved learner results

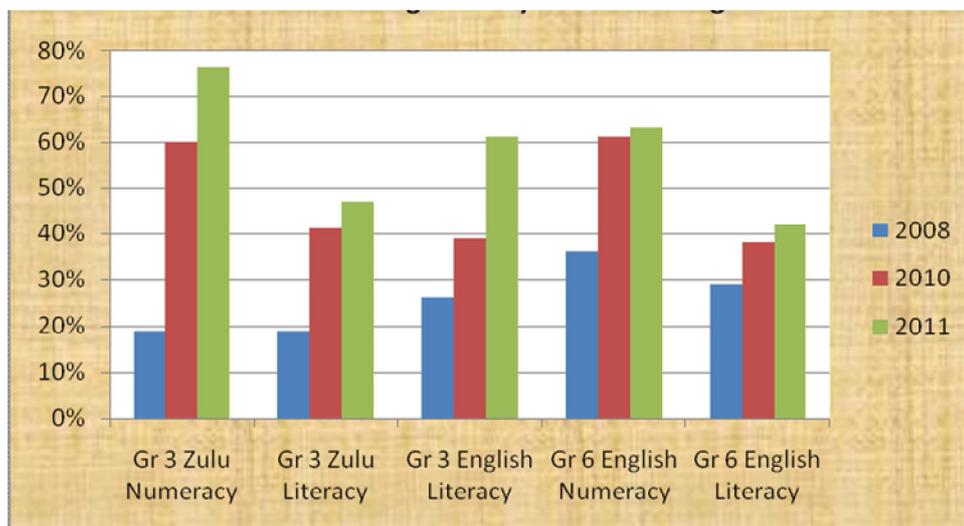
Learner results improved significantly:

- The Grade 3 Zulu Numeracy average - from 19% to 60%
- The Grade 3 Zulu Literacy average - from 19% to 41%
- The Grade 3 English Literacy average - from 26% to 39%
- The Grade 6 English Numeracy average - from 36% to 61%
- The Grade 6 English Literacy average - from 29% to 38%

By the end of 2011

The school had improved its averages even further, with the greatest improvements in Grade 3 Literacy and Numeracy as illustrated below.

Grade Averages



Conclusion

These continued improvements are all the more meaningful given that the contextual and socio-economic conditions of the District, the school and its community remain unchanged.

Given that the school was already well led, well managed and fulfilling most administrative requirements, it would appear that the factors that contributed most towards the significant improvement in learner results at this school were:

- The provision of teaching and learning materials for every learner and every teacher, in every learning area in every grade.
- Ongoing, regular classroom observation and practical support with how to use the teacher and learner materials meaningfully to fulfil curriculum requirements.