

Case study 6

This Quintile 2 ex-Limpopo, now Mpumalanga High School is in the Bushbuckridge District. This has been among the worst performing Districts in the country for some years. Although it is a rural school, it serves learners from the nearby Oakley township.

Carrying water is a daily task in this rural township



Poverty

About half an hour from Hazyview, this school serves a community where small-scale subsistence farming and vendor trading are the main sources of income. For many families, this supplemented only by state pensions and/or child grants. There is widespread poverty and illiteracy, and the school's feeding scheme, introduced in 2011, feeds all of the learners. During the Winter School sessions for Grade 12 learners, the teachers provide food for the learners.

Access to resources

The school's administrative block has had electricity for some time now, while the rest of the school was only connected to the grid in 2011, as a result of the school's own efforts. The school still has pit toilets and gets its running water from water tanks it fills from a connection to the Oakley community's water system. A mobile clinic visits the school occasionally to check on the learners' health.



Malnutrition

After each holiday, many children exhibit signs of malnutrition and it takes about three weeks on the feeding scheme before some of the learners are able to concentrate properly during lessons. Also, many male and female learners do not return to school on time due to their involvement in initiation schooling.

Maintenance

Although the school grounds were kept neat and tidy, the school had not been able to address its building maintenance challenges and there were other signs of poor maintenance.



The medium of instruction challenge

At this school, the medium of instruction situation is:

- 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
- Sepedi and Setswana speaking teachers who don't speak much English, try to teach Sepedi, Setswana and Zulu speaking learners who are not exposed to much English, through the medium of English. Up to 50% of their actual teaching is done in Sepedi and/or Setswana.

In 2008

This school was battling to meaningfully fulfil its leadership, management and administrative responsibilities, and its overall pass rates for Grades 10, 11 and 12 were very weak:

- Grade 10 overall pass rate – 24%
- Grade 11 overall pass rate – 7%
- Grade 12 overall pass rate – 18%

To improve this situation, the school needed support with:

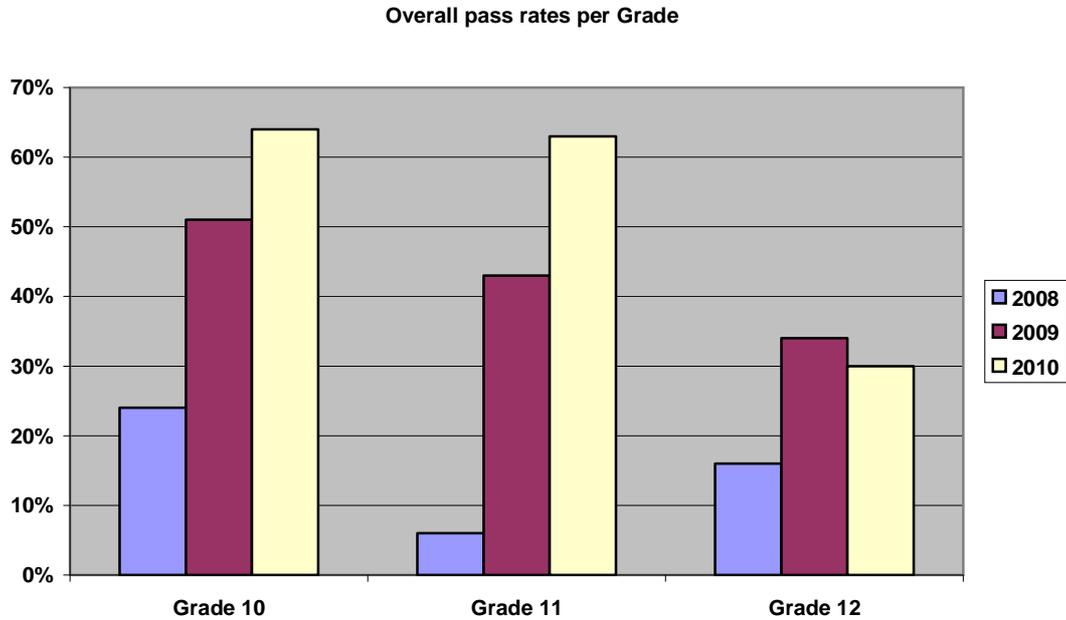
- Leadership, management and administration
- Curriculum planning and administration
- Teaching and learning resources
- Curriculum implementation

By the end of 2010

There were clear signs of improved leadership, management and curriculum implementation; and learner results had improved.

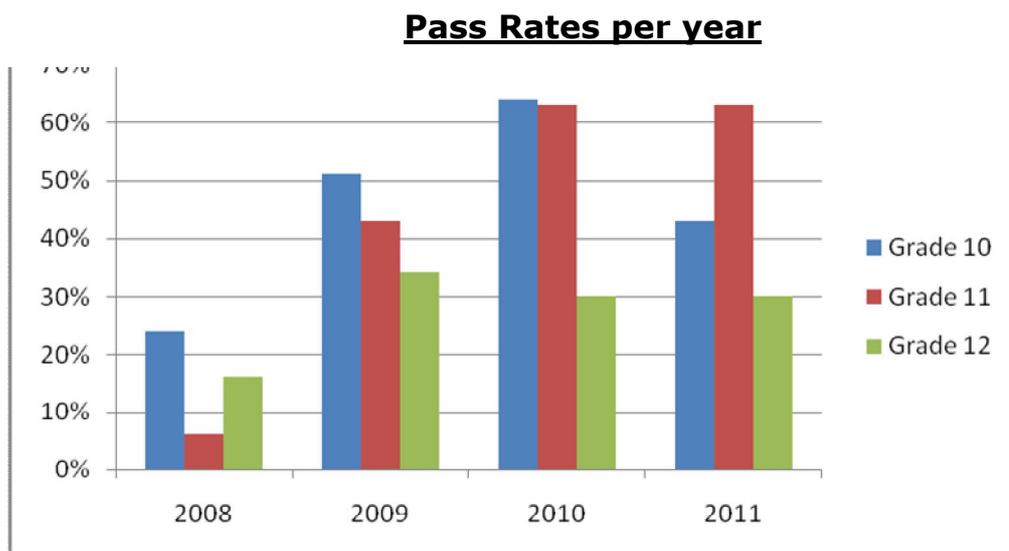
A) Improved learner results

The Grade 10, 11 and 12 overall pass rates steadily improved in 2009 and 2010 as illustrated in the graph below.



By the end of 2011

Results had dropped off in Grade 10, but remained significantly better than 2008 pass rates across all three Grades as illustrated in the graph below.



B) Signs of improved leadership and management

As already mentioned, due to improved leadership, management and administrative practices and improved relations with the local authorities and the local community, the school had initiated a number of its own school improvement projects as clear indicators of its capacity to take control of its own destiny. These include:

Tidier spaces with storage space



A partitioned administration area

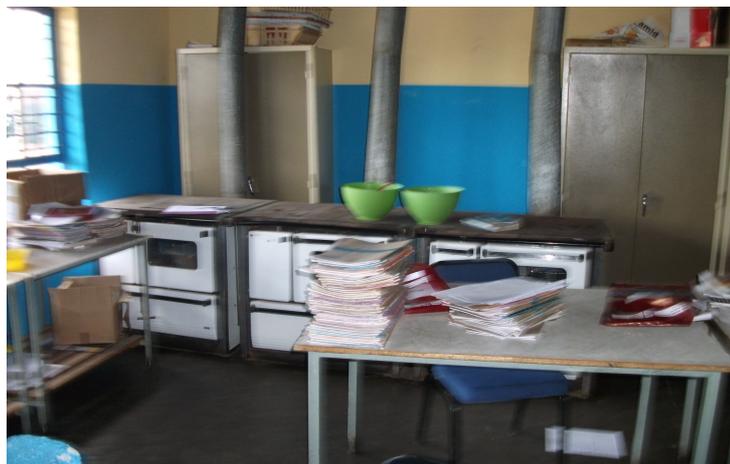


- Securing funding from African Rainbow Minerals, through the local tribal authorities, to connect the school to the electricity grid and to refurbish all classrooms.

A freshly painted classroom with electricity



Converting a classroom into a consumer studies centre



Building a cooking area for the school's feeding scheme



Conclusions

These significant improvements are all the more meaningful given that they were achieved within just three years, while the contextual and socio-economic conditions of the District and the school remained unchanged.

Given the remarkable improvements celebrated in this case study, it is clear that in spite of the numerous challenges faced by this school, it has managed to achieve the kind of functionality that supports successful curriculum implementation.

The school has come a long way towards meaningfully integrating:

- Improved leadership, management and administration on the one hand; with
- Improved curriculum planning and implementation on the other; to
- Deliver learner results it is justly proud of.

There is however, still much work to be done. Among other things, two of the school's new goals are to:

- Bring the Grade 10 and 12 overall pass rate in line with the Grade 11 results; and
- Improve the quality of all passes because only 3 of its 2010 and 4 of its 2011 Grade 12 learners achieved university exemptions.

With the continued commitment of the school staff, the local community and district officials to working together on continually improving the school, there is every reason to believe that this school will go on to produce the improved learner results it aspires to.