

## Case study 7

This Quintile 1, deep rural KwaZulu/Natal high school is about 20 kilometres off the tar road at Tugela Ferry in KwaZulu-Natal's Msinga District.

**The rural environment around the school**



### **Poverty**

The surrounding rural communities engage mainly in traditional cattle, goat and subsistence crop farming. Most adults in the community are illiterate. Unemployment and poverty are widespread and families depend on small incomes from family members who are migrant workers, and on state pensions and/or child grants.

**Pension and grant payout and market day outside the school**



### **Limited access to resources**

The school is not connected to the electricity grid, and lost what electricity it did get from a solar power system due to vandalism. It currently depends on a 130 metre long extension cord 'lifeline' between the school and the next door clinic for a single electricity point at the school. It gets its water from rainwater tanks, and has pit toilets. Fortunately, the nearby clinic is accessible for medical attention.

**Grade 8 – 10 classrooms, vandalised solar power system and rainwater tank**



**The pit toilets – boys and girls left, teachers' right**



**Maintenance**

Although the school grounds are kept neat and tidy, and the new principal had the school's roof repaired and the buildings repainted in 2008, the school had not been able to address all of its maintenance challenges. For example windows, doors, desks and chairs still needed to be repaired, and classrooms had to double up as storage spaces.



**Distance and time**

Many learners have to walk long distances to get to school each day because there is no learner transport system in the area. This often results in late arrivals at school.

**Orphans, child led homes, malnutrition and poor health**

Increasing numbers of learners are orphans who run their homes and care for their younger siblings; or live alone. This impacts significantly the irregular attendance of some learners. Many children also exhibit signs of malnutrition and neglect, especially after school holidays. As a result, the school introduced a feeding scheme for all learners in 2011. During the Winter School sessions for Grade 12 learners, the teachers provide food for the learners.

**Traditional practices**

Many male and female learners do not return to school on time after holidays due to their involvement in initiation schooling. In addition, it is not uncommon for learners to arrive at school late because they are attending to traditional family responsibilities.

**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
- Zulu speaking teachers, who speak very little English, teach Zulu speaking learners who are exposed to very little English, through the medium of English. Much of the actual teaching in English medium classes is done in Zulu.

**In 2008**

This school was battling to meaningfully fulfil its leadership, management and administrative responsibilities. The overall pass rates for Grades 10 and 11 were good, while they were very poor in Grade 12, and the quality of the passes were disappointing:

- Grade 10 overall pass rate – 69%
- Grade 11 overall pass rate – 62%
- Grade 12 overall pass rate – 22%

To improve this situation, the school needed support with:

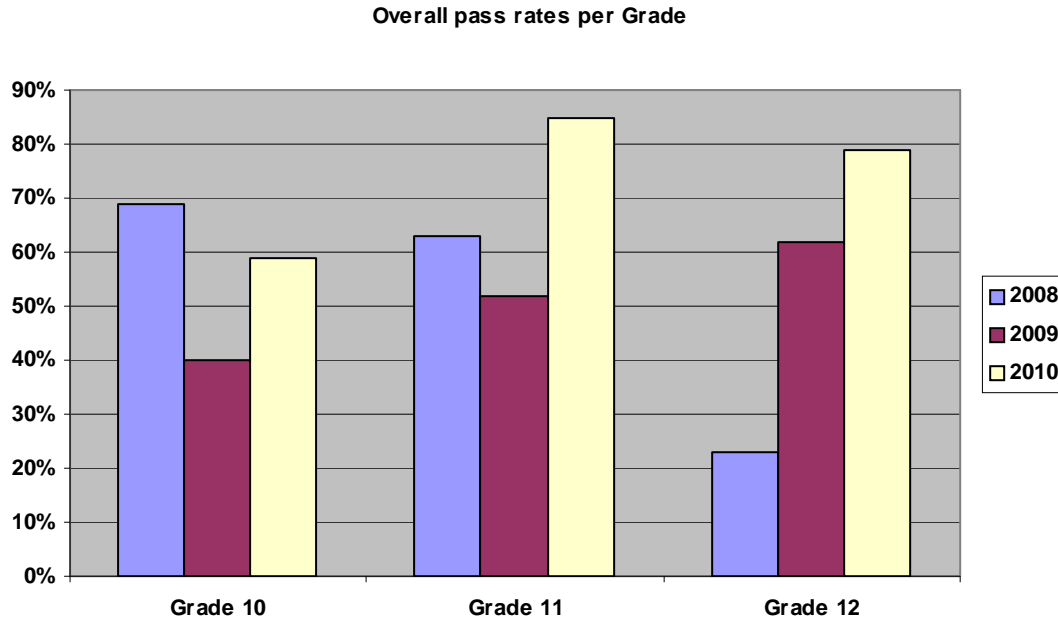
- Leadership, management and administration
- Curriculum planning and administration
- Teaching and learning resources
- Curriculum implementation

**By the end of 2010**

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

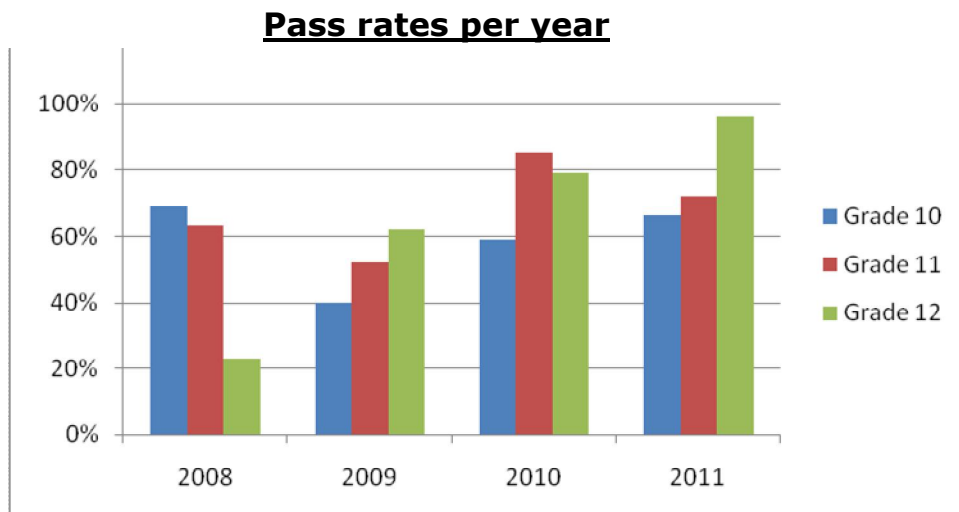
### A) Improved learner results

Although the Grade 10 pass rates had dropped over the three years, the Grade 11 and 12 results had improved as illustrated below.



### By the end of 2011

The Grade 10 and 11 results had evened out to roughly what they were in 2008, while the Grade 12 results had continued to improve over 2008 results as shown below:



### B) Signs of improved leadership and management

As already mentioned, due to improved leadership, management and administrative practices and improved relations with 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:

- Negotiating directly with the District Director to channel their savings from the project's LTSM donation towards school improvements such as:
  - New classroom furniture for learners



- New tables and filing cabinets for the educators
- Erecting a security room at the entrance to the school grounds and replacing the locks on the classroom security doors
- Employing a night watchman to stop vandalism
- Improving its relations with the school governing body. As a result, the Chairperson of the SGB assists the school management team with:
  - The management of the school's general worker
  - Presenting the school's case to the local councillor. This has led to:

- Securing agreements for the school's connection to the municipal water and electricity networks.
  - A successful SGB meeting with Eskom that led to the installation of an electricity connection outside the school.
  - With the SGB's support, the school is in the process of trying to raise funds to have the necessary wiring and fittings installed in the school so that it can be connected to the grid.
  - The paving of the previously muddy entrance to the school so that it is possible to drive onto the school grounds when it rains.
- The implementation of a feeding scheme for all learners
  - Applying to the Department of Education for an administrative clerk

### **Conclusions**

These improvements are all the more meaningful given that the contextual and socio-economic conditions of the District, the school and its community remain unchanged. They suggest that this school is well on the way to achieving 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, the school's new goals are to:

- Bring the Grade 10 and 11 pass rates more in line with the Grade 12 results;
- Improve the quality of all passes because none of the 2010 or 2011 Grade 12 learners achieved university exemptions.

With the continued commitment of the school staff, the SGB, district officials and the local community to work 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.