

## Case study 8

This Quintile 4 School is a previously 'relatively advantaged' English medium Indian school in a small KwaZulu-Natal town. Its learner profile has changed dramatically over the last 10 years, with more than 80% of its learners now bussed in from surrounding rural areas where the communities speak mainly Zulu.



### **Relatively advantaged school serving disadvantaged communities**

Because the school is still classified as a Quintile 4 school, it receives a much lower subsidy per learner than its poorer counterparts, and does not qualify for feeding scheme support. At the same time, the majority of its parents live in rural communities where unemployment and illiteracy are widespread. Most cannot afford to pay their children's school fees. This puts the school under tremendous financial pressure, and in many ways, the socio-economic factors impacting on this previously advantaged school are similar to those impacting on poorer schools.

### **80% of the learners are bussed in from surrounding rural areas**



As a consequence, the school has been dependant on fundraising activities in the local business community and on donations from local businesses to maintain its buildings and facilities, and to run the school's feeding scheme for several years.

### **Maintaining facilities is an ongoing challenge**

So, although it is situated in a small town suburb and has the outward appearance of being well resourced, closer inspection reveals how the school is struggling to make ends meet:

- While it had adequate classroom space and a well managed stock room; it did not have enough textbooks for every learner. To partially address this challenge, the school has developed a system of rotating the books it has between different classes in the same Grade.
- While it has generous school grounds, including sports fields, it is only able to regularly maintain the grounds around the buildings. To maintain the sports fields, it has secured help from the local Correctional Services Institution.
- While it had a change rooms near the fields, they had been vandalised, and had not been used for several years.
- While it has a school library facility, most of the books are outdated.
- While it has a small computer centre, all of its computers are refurbished donations from friends of the school.

### **The medium of instruction challenge**

- English speaking teachers teach mainly Zulu speaking learners (who are exposed to very little English outside of school), through the medium of English from Grade 1.

### **In 2008**

This school had good leadership and management. It was well organized, well maintained and fulfilled all of the administrative curriculum policy requirements. The principal dedicated a great deal of his time to fundraising activities to secure the resources and services the school needed to maintain its facilities and to care for its learners. Many of the teachers, particularly in the Foundation Phase, had created rich, stimulating learning environments in their classrooms.



The well-maintained grounds and buildings, the privately funded feeding scheme, the donated computers, and the assistance from the Correctional Services to burn and

cut the grass on the sports fields are just some examples of this school's commitment and independent initiative.

#### **Well maintained grounds**



#### **Sports fields beyond the fencing**



However, in spite of all of these efforts, the school's Literacy and Numeracy averages were poor, ranging between:

- 18 and 20% in Grade 3
- 15 and 18% in Grade 6

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

- Teaching and learning resources
- Aspects of curriculum planning
- Meaningful curriculum implementation, particularly in the Intermediate Phase

#### **By the end of 2010**

##### **A) The good administrative leadership and management continued**

The school continued to initiate school improvement projects, including:

- The renovation and conversion of the changing rooms near the fields into a small school hall. It has an alarm system, burglar bars, ceiling fans, and a portable stage used for prize giving events and parent meetings. The school plans to hire the hall out on weekends to raise funds some of the funds it needs.
- Created feature gardens all around the school.
- Expanded its relationship with the local Correctional Services Institution to include the repair of classroom furniture free of charge.

**B) The school initiated a new welfare programme** to cater for the increasing need for at the school. The programme includes a committee to identify and refer learners with welfare needs to appropriate service providers, and to counsel learners with problems. Examples of some of the interventions include:

- Each year, disadvantaged learners are provided with winter track suits, blankets (from the local Phoenix Advice Care Centre); and uniforms (from the local branch of Pep Stores)

- A learner with chronic watering eyes was referred to an ophthalmologist at the local hospital and successfully treated.
- A learner with a deformed leg, due to bus accident when he was two years old, was referred to the local hospital, and from there to Grey's hospital for successful corrective surgery.
- A Grade R learner is receiving ongoing physiotherapy for a disability as a result of childhood injury.
- To date 8 learners have been referred to Welfare for intervention.

**C) The school had set up two remedial programmes:**

**The Intensive Remedial Reading Programme (IRRP)**

- All learners with reading difficulties are identified and distributed to the Foundation Phase classes every day for an hour. In these classes they participate in phonic, word and breakthrough reading activities.
- Foundation Phase educators train their Intermediate Phase colleagues in how to develop reading skills with educators on reading development.
- Once a week a remedial class is conducted by a retired educator who concentrates on reading development.

**The Visual Literacy Programme (VLP)**

- Learners with reading difficulties view television programmes like Takalani Sesame Street twice a week to provide richer exposure to English.
- Learners are instructed to communicate in English only.
- Every class in the school has the following:
  - Phonic frieze, breakthrough core words with sentence words
  - Labels for items of furniture

**C) There were also signs of improved curriculum implementation and corresponding signs of significantly improved learner results**

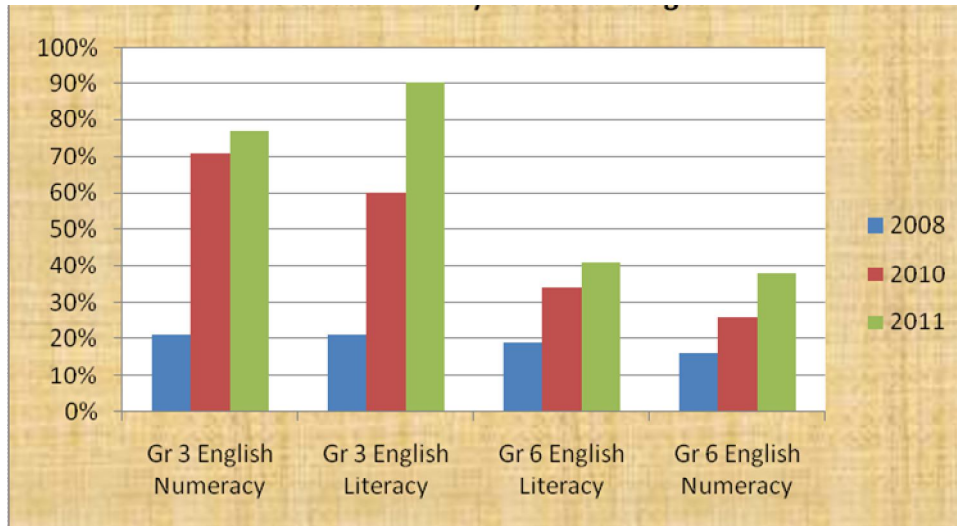
- The Grade 3 English Numeracy average - from 21% to 71%
- The Grade 3 English Literacy average - from 21% to 60%
- The Grade 6 English Literacy average - from 19% to 34%
- The Grade 6 English Numeracy average - from 16% to 26%



### **By the end of 2011**

The school had improved its averages even further for all four subjects as illustrated below. Especially significant is the improvement in English Literacy since the medium of instruction was one of the school's greatest challenges in 2008.

### **Grade Averages**



### **Conclusion**

Given that the school was already well led, well managed and fulfilling all 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.
- The combined impact of the welfare and remedial education programmes initiated by the staff.