

## NEW APPOINTMENTS AT JET



## MOVERS AND SHAKERS AT JET



**D**eon Smith has been appointed Finance and Administration Manager. Deon commenced duties in January 2006.

*"JET is acknowledged as one of the leading NGO's who provide a range of specialist educational services. Among your founding objectives we note with appreciation that you stand for quality access to education, inclusivity, the promotion of sound learning outcomes and programmes for employment security which are central to guiding the organization's purpose. ."*

Malele Petje  
Chief Executive Officer  
Gauteng Department of  
Education  
October 2005

**C**arla Pereira has been promoted to Senior Manager, Evaluation and Research Department. Carla has been with the organisation since 2003.

**N**kululeko Dube has been appointed Junior Bookkeeper. Nkululeko commenced duties in April 2006

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April  
2006

**FOCUS ON: IMPROVING SCHOOLING**

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), JET and READ have formed a partnership to improve the state of literacy in all Gauteng public schools. This seven-year Accelerated Programme for Language, Literacy and Communication (APLLC) was announced by GDE head Mallele Petje at the JET Annual Report Back meeting last October. An agreement between the three parties was signed in February 2006. The programme will be rolled out to all primary and high schools in Gauteng from 2006.

*"This multi-stakeholder initiative will involve sharing responsibilities, resources and competencies towards a common objective which is to improve and enhance the listening, speaking, reading, writing and comprehension skills of learners. This will be achieved through an in-service teacher training, mentoring and monitoring programme linked to appropriate resource provisioning in public schools."*

Mallele Petje  
GDE Head of Department  
JET Annual Review Meeting  
6 October 2005

The poor state of reading and writing in South African schools has become well known through cross-national tests which regularly show our children exhibiting lower levels of literacy than those of

## A PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE LITERACY

*By: Denise Barry  
Senior Project Manager  
Evaluation and Research  
and  
Nick Taylor  
CEO  
JET Education Services*



*Mallele Petje  
CEO  
Gauteng Department of Education*

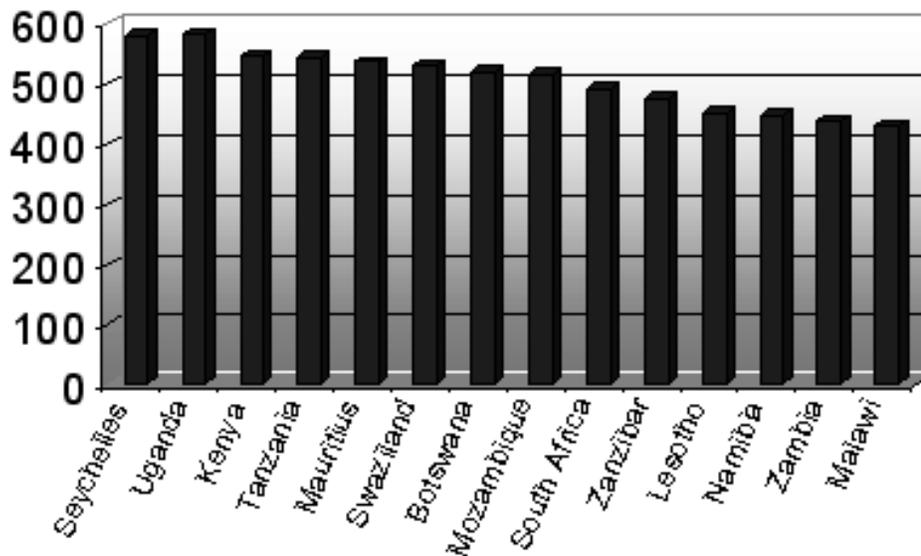
many countries, including much poorer neighbours such as Mozambique, Botswana and Swaziland. South Africa came ninth out of the 14 African countries that participated in the SACMEQ<sup>1</sup> Grade 6 literacy test published in 2005.

According to Minister Naledi Pandor the Department of Education's own Systemic Evaluation 2005 Grade 6 Report reveals "a crisis in our system". A total of 30 000 learners were tested in literacy, numeracy and science and achieved a national mean score of 38% in literacy in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT, which is generally English), 27% in mathematics and 43% in natural science. Additionally, the report revealed that learners not only couldn't read in the LOLT, but equally poor results emerged from the mother-tongue reading tests.

Low levels of literacy place poor children at a double disadvantage on leaving school, whether they seek to survive in the subsistence economy, on the factory floor,

<sup>1</sup>Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality, is a collaboration between 15 countries, through the respective Ministries of Education. South African Minister Naledi Pandor is the current Chair.

## SACMEQ II Grade 6 Literacy Scores



or enter university to study for careers in business or the professions. This is the new meaning of marginalisation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Reading and writing are prerequisite tools for all other learning. This is true of the conceptually dense texts of all disciplines, but particularly those of mathematics and the sciences. Comprehension suffers if the decoding process takes up too much of the limited resources of the reader. There is a direct correlation between vocabulary and reasoning skills and high school textbooks use vocabulary beyond the comprehension of most South African learners. The disparity between the vocabulary a learner has and the vocabulary required to access texts across the curriculum needs to be bridged by development of high level reading skills, using a wide array of reading material.

It is the aim of the Accelerated Programme for Language, Literacy and Communication to supply all schools with

appropriate reading materials and to train teachers to use these effectively so that all learners are able to deploy a variety of reading strategies. As they enter high school, children need to move beyond understanding text at the literal level and learn to decipher meaning at the inferential and evaluative levels. This level of comprehension is essential for children to be able to cope with the demands of all other subjects in the school curriculum.

The role of language as a major theme in the construction of knowledge and meaning has been researched over a number of years and it is well documented that reading and academic achievement have a high correlation. It is also well documented that second/additional language learners need more than conversational English for academic success across the curriculum. Additionally, context embedded instructional conversations focusing on academic content and concepts that are relevant

across the curriculum are essential for culturally and linguistically diverse learners to communicate in academic English. Many teachers in the South African context lack the proficiency and confidence to sustain instruction in a second language.

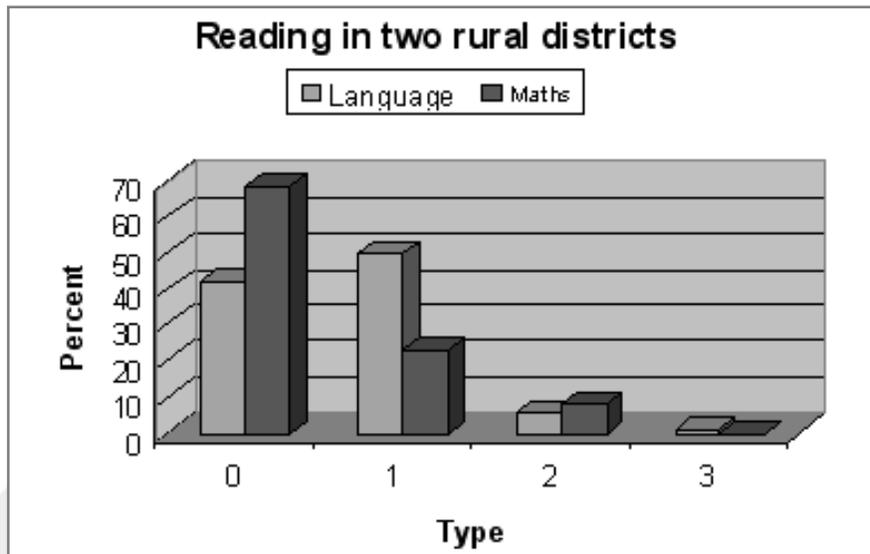
Against this background the GDE has developed a language, literacy and communication strategy for the upgrading of literacy skills in Gauteng.

The strategy represents an ambitious programme to involve all 1 915 public schools in Gauteng. It will include a professional development programme for literacy educators, detailed reading and writing programmes for learners, appropriate reading and instructional materials for pupils and teachers and a quality assurance framework to allow for early identification of problems and provision of solutions for improving the strategy.

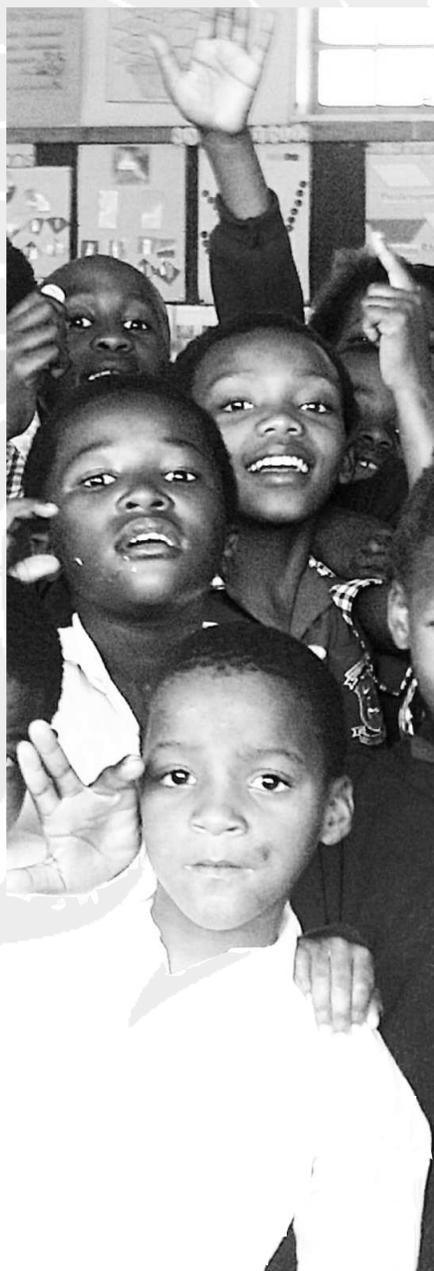
The APLLC will be driven by the GDE and the aim is to

have found that learning gains are proportional to the degree of curriculum coverage, and the extent to which the level of cognitive demand at which the material is presented approaches the level specified by the official curriculum. In addition, one research project found that greater quantities of reading, writing and homework enhance learning, while another concluded that pupils perform better in maths when the teacher is responsive to the stage of development of individual children, gives explicit feedback in response to pupil knowledge displays and makes clear the criteria for judging a good display.

The relative lack of conclusive research findings regarding the details of pedagogical practices probably derives from the paucity of longitudinal designs to date. Nevertheless, a number of highly evocative descriptions are being produced which give direction to the formulation of research hypotheses for the closer study of teaching practices. Particularly striking is the description of reading and writing in Grade 3 classrooms in a sample of rural schools reported in one JET evaluation study. In over 40% of language classes and nearly 70% of maths classes no interaction with text of any kind was observed, even though textbooks were available in sufficient quantities for each child to have access to a copy in over 90% of language classes and nearly 80% of maths classes (see Figure). Where 'reading' was observed in language classes, it generally took the form of the teacher reading three or four sentences off the blackboard, with children following in chorus. Individual interaction with text was observed in only about 5% of language classes and less often in mathematics.



**Type** 3: Pupils read individually; T interacts  
 2: Ps read individually; little T guidance  
 1: Ps follow T /read in chorus/reading very restricted  
 0: No reading



Similarly, in nearly 30% of classes no pupil writing was observed during the lesson; where writing does occur it consists predominantly of single words or phrases. Analysis of pupil language workbooks undertaken in the final quarter of the school year indicated that in fully two-thirds of classes observed pupils did no writing longer than phrases. It is becoming increasingly clear that the teaching of reading and writing in the majority of schools is rudimentary in the extreme, and that a major intervention aimed at improving reading and writing practices must constitute the single most urgent priority for South African schooling.

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This article is a summary of the paper entitled *Equity, Efficiency and the Development of South African Schools*, by Nick Taylor. The full paper is available on the JET website at [www.jet.org.za](http://www.jet.org.za).



# TESTING LITERACY AND NUMERACY



In addition to the above-mentioned internationally funded programmes, the ERD is undertaking evaluations for a number of locally funded programmes, such as the Zenex-funded SUPEDI Project, the Mindset Project and COUNT, as well as the BHP Billiton-funded Mveledzandivho Project which is being implemented in Gauteng, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and North West.

In collaboration with JET's School Development and Evaluation Unit, the ERD was involved in the development of two flagship research-based books, namely, *Improving Learning and Teaching in Schools*. These books, published by Getting started, opened new avenues for the dissemination of research abroad.

The ERD is currently undertaking an evaluation of the impact of good practice in schools. This project is based on lessons learned from the research conducted in this area. The ERD saw the need for a research project that would explore the impact of good practice in schools. The project is structured as follows:

- Create a platform for the sharing of research findings, experiences and good practice in the research field.

The consortium is already operational and is meeting regularly in pursuit of its purpose.



JET's Evaluation and Research Division (ERD) holds a competitive advantage in the field of literacy and numeracy testing. This is because JET's Literacy and Numeracy tests were developed in consultation with officials from the National Department of Education and are specifically aligned to the National Department's own Systemic Evaluation testing instruments. The JET tests are in demand to evaluate the impacts of both locally and internationally funded projects.

The DfID-funded Limpopo Department of Education's KHANYISA Programme is using the JET Literacy and Numeracy tests to assess learner performance in this programme, and has already conducted baseline and 6-month follow-up tests. The baseline findings have been shared with the schools that received the programme. The Department of Education is including the MFC and MofE in the evaluation process during the follow-up tests.

In addition to learner performance management and social data, the ERD is using the KHANYISA data for research purposes. In order to determine what variables correlate strongly with learner achievement, the ERD is currently using the data that were collected during the baseline field tests to run correlations between scores and the different variables. This will go a long way towards identifying factors that correlate favourably with learner achievement and that could be considered in the conceptualization of future research and intervention programmes.

Contrary to the hypothesis that learners in rural schools perform poorly due to their

location, the ERD is currently undertaking an evaluation of the impact of good practice in schools. This project is based on lessons learned from the research conducted in this area. The ERD saw the need for a research project that would explore the impact of good practice in schools. The project is structured as follows:

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- The consortium is already operational and is meeting regularly in pursuit of its purpose.

## Introduction

South Africa has one of the highest rates of school inequality in the world and certainly the highest in Africa by a large margin. The priorities of the South African government of improving the national growth rate and redistributing resources among schools will improve the life chances of poor children in the long term. However, increasing the quality of schooling in the short term provides poor children with the best immediate chance of emerging from poverty. Yet South African children score significantly lower on cross-country assessment exercises than many of their much poorer neighbours. It is imperative, for reasons of both equity and efficiency, that we find ways of improving the effectiveness of schooling.

School improvement has been an area of intense activity by donors and NGOs in South Africa for over two decades. Government has also entered this terrain in the past five years. Although research on school improvement is a more recent development, several studies have begun to identify important lessons, both for the

# THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICA



*By: Nick Taylor*  
CEO

design of intervention programmes and for further research.

As a leading NGO in the field of school development, JET has for several years been investigating the vexed

question of why South African schools seem to underperform relative to the country's wealth and the proportion of the national budget spent on education. JET has published two books summarizing our research in this area and recently convened a Consortium for Research on School Quality to bring together scholars working in this field. What follows is a summary of the current state of knowledge about the factors which influence pupil performance in literacy and mathematics. Details may be obtained from the papers presented at the April JET seminar on this topic, which are available on the JET website at [www.jet.org.za](http://www.jet.org.za).

## Lessons from Research to Date

Important discoveries about the effects of different activities, in different spheres of the school system, on the processes and outcomes of schooling have been established by a number of new studies conducted in South African schools. These are summarized in the table overleaf:



**M**inister of Public Service and Administration, Ms Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi has said that, "the human resource capability of municipalities directly and most visibly affects the capacity of government to implement its development programmes at local level" (Parliamentary Media Briefing on Governance and Administration, 15 February 2005).

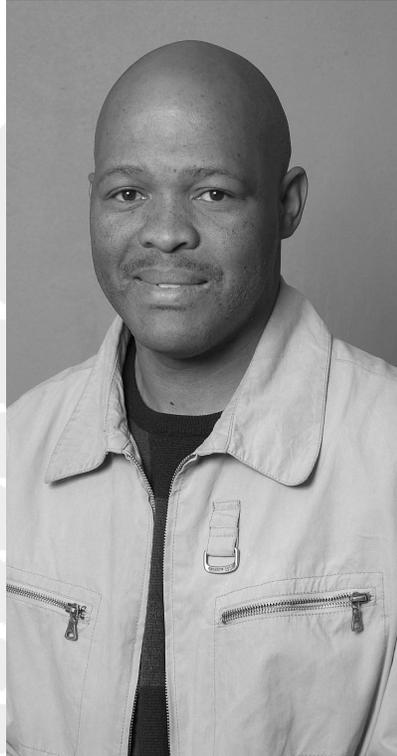
President Thabo Mbeki echoed this emphasis on the importance of local government capacity in South Africa's growth and development in his State of the Nation Address, delivered 3 February 2006. The President said:

*"For Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGI-SA) to succeed, it is clear that the machinery of state, and especially local government, should function effectively and efficiently. During the past year, our government has undertaken a detailed assessment to determine what we need to do to improve the capacity of our system of local government."*

A number of government-led initiatives have been conceptualized and implemented in the past few years to deal with the problem of human resources capacity in the public service and the local government sector in particular. The White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service outlines some of government's central goals in this regard:

- to promote **human resource development** and capacity building as a necessary precondition for effective change and institution building;

## **CAPACITY BUILDING IN MUNICIPALITIES**



*By: Letshego Mokeki  
Divisional Manager  
Workforce Development*

- to upgrade the standards of efficiency and effectiveness and improve the quality of **service delivery**.

The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) has taken up the challenge and has developed both a policy framework and related programmes aimed at developing skills and competencies. Among these initiatives are:

- *The National Capacity Building Framework* – a comprehensive, integrated short- and long-term

strategy for the development of human resources capacity at local and district government level.

- *Project Consolidate* – aimed at assessing and developing the capacity of municipalities across the country to implement policy and deliver services. Project Consolidate is a targeted hands-on support and engagement programme to build the capacity of municipalities. It seeks to enable municipalities to deliver on their mandate and to enable the consolidation of the local government system in the longer term.
- *Municipal Leadership Development Pilot Programme* – a focused training intervention aimed at developing a skilled 'cadre' of leadership at local government level.

The desperate situation of inadequate capacity is due to a variety of factors, among them the following:

- Putting political considerations first when placing people, at the expense of skills and competencies for the job;
- The ever-growing flight of skilled people from rural to urban areas, for factors of perceived quality of life;
- The real or perceived interference by politicians in the work of professionals;
- The real scarcity of technical skills (financial managers, engineers etc) at the local government level.

Communities on the receiving end of service delivery problems have been rising up in protest in recent months.



JET believes that while it is the mandate of government to ensure capacity building, it is the responsibility of all – civil society, business, institutions of higher learning – to contribute to promoting good governance in local government.

### **The Municipal Skills Support Project**

JET, with funding from the Ford Foundation, is providing services and training worth R1,8 million to municipalities throughout the country in the Municipal Skills Support Project.

This project has received support from the DPLG, the Local Government SETA and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

The Workforce Development Division (WFD) at JET is managing the project, including project coordination and reporting, and will deliver 48 'Work Ethics and Service Improvement' workshops to 1 000 municipal staff in six provinces: North West, seven State, Gauteng, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal,

Mpumalanga and Limpopo. JET is covering the full cost for running these workshops.

JET's Work Ethics and Improvement of Service Delivery (KgateloPele) course is developed to meet the requirements of the unit standard '*Demonstrate an understanding of how to participate effectively in the Workplace*'. It draws on the Batho-Pele principles aimed at developing a culture of a positive work ethic and improving levels of service. The course covers, amongst other topics:

- Different beliefs and definition of work and their impact on attitude towards work;
- Effective communication in the workplace;
- Stakeholder service delivery expectations and how to meet them;
- Information about legislation, policies and procedures that govern and influence behaviour in the workplace;
- Importance of a vision and mission for an organisation

and how they influence the culture of the organisation;

- Importance of work ethics and how these ethics impact on overall behaviour in the workplace;
- Activity-based look at service delivery, productivity and strategic planning.

### **Beneficiaries**

Identifying the municipalities to benefit from this project was a difficult task, given the need and demand for the training. The following factors were taken into consideration in the identification and selection process:

- To conduct the courses in municipalities already identified as needing assistance through the Project Consolidate initiative;
- To assist municipalities that have been experiencing high levels of community unrest and protests;
- To support and strengthen municipalities that are already performing well (Vuna awards recipients etc).

The project was rolled out in October 2005. Since then, JET staff and consultants have travelled to more than 15 destinations throughout the country – from Mafikeng in the North West, to Pietermaritzburg in Kwa-Zulu Natal to Victoria West in the Northern Cape. By the end of February we had delivered 23 workshops with over 315 participants. The rest of the workshops are scheduled for implementation through 2006.

Preparation for the rollout of the project involved a lot of discussion and information sharing with role-players from national government level to municipalities themselves. JET

staff and its consultants participating in the project underwent a rigorous training programme, especially on the context of local government. This preparatory work has proven valuable, given the overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received from workshop participants.

Revonia Maboe, a participant in the project in Ventersdorp, said:

*"If our municipality can implement some of the key issues dealt with in this workshop there will definitely be a change for the better."*

Another participant at the Sol Plaatjie Municipality echoed a sentiment expressed by many throughout provinces that "enior management and political heads" must be trained on these issues. Still another participant said:

*"It is important to train us on legislation, governance and the regulatory framework for municipalities."*

### **Impact**

The WFD Division is currently analysing information received from facilitators' reports, evaluation forms and the debriefing session. We are preparing three types of reports:

- An individual municipality report providing a local reflection of the workshop;
- A provincially based report providing a provincial reflection; and
- A global report for partners and clients at national level (DPLG, SALGA, LGSETA) providing an overall reflection and assessment of the training throughout municipalities and provinces.

In these reports we will be interrogating and discussing the issues widely raised by participants:

- Lack of clarity on the roles of political and administrative staff. In many instances, municipal staff members are confused about reporting lines and boundaries. (It is useful to note that the DPLG has been working on a booklet on roles and responsibilities, to be released soon.)
- Suspensions of managers and long delays in the resolution of these cases, resulting in leadership vacuums and, in turn, poor delivery of services.

- In many instances, municipalities do not have policies and procedures for municipal governance and instead use 'Council Resolutions' to govern municipalities. In some cases these Council Resolutions are not checked for compliance with legislation.
- The participants overwhelmingly indicate a need for training on municipal legislation.

JET will also be commissioning a further impact study to assess the training and identify gaps that may exist and that may encourage or discourage learning in the workplace.

The study will assess the impact of this project and identify other areas for collaboration with government, development agencies and the private sector. JET has, in recent months, established a relationship with partners such as InWent and will be exploring areas of collaboration especially within the Local Economic Development sector. These collaborations are important if South Africa is to have "a viable system of Local Government focused on service delivery and development ... enabling government to meet its obligations by 2011 and be on course towards meeting the 2014 targets of halving poverty and unemployment," as stated by Deputy Minister for Provincial and Local Government, Ms Nomatyala Hangana, at the Institute for Local Government Management Annual Conference 2005: Cape Town 27-29 July 2005.



The concept of partnerships is not new and has become increasingly popular in the past few years. There are various types of partnerships, ranging from formal regulated public-private-partnerships (PPPs) to less formal agreements and understandings between public and private institutions.

The partnership agreements between private companies and public institutions (included here are Community Based Organisations, Non-government Organisations and Public Benefit Organisations) have yielded positive results in education. Schools and other educational institutions have benefited by receiving necessary equipment and essential resources to improve the quality of learning and teaching.

The more formal PPPs have recently been started in the education sector with the Free State Education Department being the first among the provinces to implement delivery using this method. The project, once completed, will deliver ten new schools to the Free State in record time and certainly a lot faster than if government alone had done it. However, these types of PPPs are strictly regulated and only have space for a certain number of partners.

The less formal PPPs definitely have a role to play in improving the quality of education. As mentioned, these partnerships have already contributed to improving education. However, much more can be done to ensure that the partnership has the desired effect and is beneficial to all parties involved.

In the past most private sector companies have tended to

## PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION



*By: Nevina Smith  
Project Manager  
School Development and Support*

make their allocations, hand over the resources and leave the institutions to their own devices. This approach, however, has not always had successful outcomes as, in many instances, the very people to whom the resources have been allocated are unable to use them effectively and efficiently.

Throughout the world, studies have shown that the private sector has far better skills and efficiencies to ensure that resources are used effectively to deliver the desired results. The success of partnership projects therefore lies in developing the partnership beyond the allocation level – sometimes to assistance in implementation and, most importantly, to an evaluation of the outcomes.

This means an investment of time and human resources. The private sector may itself provide the skills required by allocating staff to spend time in the institution to effect the transfer of skills. Alternatively, or additionally, an outside specialist service provider may be appointed to ensure that the allocated resources are used effectively. It is

important, however, that the company should remain close to the project, monitoring project impact and ensuring that the desired outcomes are achieved.

As a specialist service provider in the education arena, JET has worked with a wide range of public and private sector players across a broad spectrum of partnership projects. Through this experience, JET has identified key factors of best practice to support the synergistic benefits that partnerships can deliver when properly targeted, managed and monitored.

Partnerships between private sector companies and public sector institutions can become more meaningful when they are recognised not only as investments in a particular school or institution or learning community, but also as investments in the future of the country as well as the future success of the company. Resources allocated to skills development at any level assist in reducing poverty by ensuring that more people become employable. In the bigger picture, such investments contribute to a better economic environment for the country as a whole.

Partnerships where skills, resources and efficiencies are exchanged to achieve greater results for all concerned are proving to be a constructive way forward for socio-economic development in the country.



## PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPROVED LEARNING

FACTORS	EFFECTIVE PRACTICES			
	Home	District and higher	School	Classroom
Language of instruction monitor	Speak LOI	Guidelines for school language policy	Plans for developing proficiency	Develop proficiency
Time management	Sign homework ***	Monitor time management in schools	Regulate time use **	Adjust pace to pupil ability **
Curriculum coverage	Assist with homework *	Construct and distribute curriculum standards. Monitor, support coverage *	Monitor and support planning and delivery***	Teacher knowledge Complete all curriculum standards ****
Reading & Writing	Read **	Distribute books and stationery	Procure and manage books & stationery **	Read and write *
Assessment	Monitor results	Quality assure and monitor results	Quality assure and monitor tests. Support *	Assess regularly Provide feedback *

\* Stars indicate the number of recent South African research studies which have found a significant association between this factor and higher than expected learning, taking account of poverty.

Poverty and home factors emerge as the most powerful determinants of educational opportunity. Most prominent is language, which is not surprising given the strong association between this variables and poverty in South Africa. Current government policy prescribes mother-tongue instruction for at least the first three grades, but this may be overturned by the parent body of any school and there is evidence that this is frequently done. As a result many of the poorest children are schooled in an unfamiliar language from the first grade. The emerging evidence from South Africa supports what has been established elsewhere: learning is greatly enhanced when the language of the home and that of the school coincide in the early years. Furthermore, where there is a dissonance between

the two, children do better at school the more their parents speak to them in the language of instruction.

A second home level practice strongly associated with improved learning, after poverty is taken into account, is also unsurprising: children who read at home do better at school and the more they read the better they do.

A number of school level management practices are associated with better than expected learning. Time regulation appears to be chief amongst these: teacher latecoming is a factor in 85% of South African schools. It is estimated that if all schools were brought up to the level of the best schools in this regard, then overall pupil performance at Grade 6 level would improve by around

15% across the system, and around 20% in the poorest schools. This factor has long been identified as a problem and the latest studies indicate that it continues to exert a strong negative impact on the time available for learning and consequently on the quality of schooling.

Curriculum leadership is a second school level factor associated with effective learning. Co-ordinating the construction of teacher plans for curriculum coverage and monitoring the implementation of the plans have been found to have positive effects on pupil performance. Another factor in this area which supports learning is the management of textbooks and stationery.

In the domain of classroom practice, a number of studies

teach the skills necessary to inculcate lifelong learning in children from the foundation phase through to the FET level (Grades R to 12). The overarching goal of the programme is to strengthen the teaching and learning of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills so that learners are able to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate effectively. READ will provide the training, resources and consultant support to all Gauteng schools in an effort to raise the quality of literacy teaching practice.

The role of JET will be to undertake an evaluation of the programme. In the first instance, the evaluation will draw a literacy profile of every school in the province. This will assist schools to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for their own development. Throughout the duration of the APLLC, JET will provide an annual monitoring service, through the ongoing assessment of reading development in the province. The final evaluation will throw light on both the impact of the READ approach to teaching literacy and the administrative capacity of the GDE to implement a quality-focused programme. Finally, the emerging results of the evaluation will be invaluable in informing literacy initiatives in the other eight provinces.

JET will monitor the growth of learners' literacy skills over the seven-year period. Assessment instruments will be designed to tap into different levels of literacy to ascertain if learners are acquiring the necessary skills to understand, know and apply language structures and conventions to promote learning across the curriculum. Tasks will also be designed to assess the ability



*By: Denise Barry  
Senior Project Manager  
Evaluation and Research*



of learners to read critically, analyse and interpret texts. Carefully designed writing tests will examine the ability of learners to express thought and opinions in writing and ascertain if they are able to understand and apply language conventions properly and structure written text logically.

The baseline study will test 4 000 learners from 160 Gauteng primary schools in 2006. Two levels of evaluation will be conducted throughout the APLLC. First, a random sample of learners in every school will be tested to measure the literacy levels in the school. Second, the performance of a selected sample of pupils from a smaller sub-sample of schools will be tracked throughout the life of the programme: this cohort study will monitor the changes in the linguistic profiles of individual children over the seven years and track how literacy development impacts on academic achievement.

With support from the GDE, a strong focus by READ to build capacity of all literacy teachers in Gauteng, and JET's external monitoring of the project, we look forward to an enriching partnership and research experience that will contribute significantly to the provision of quality education in Gauteng.

