

Enabling Schools Toolkit

Manual



**The Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual for School Leaders, Teachers,
Fieldworkers, and Community Reading Champions**

Developed by:

University College London

Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria

London South Bank University

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MATTERS

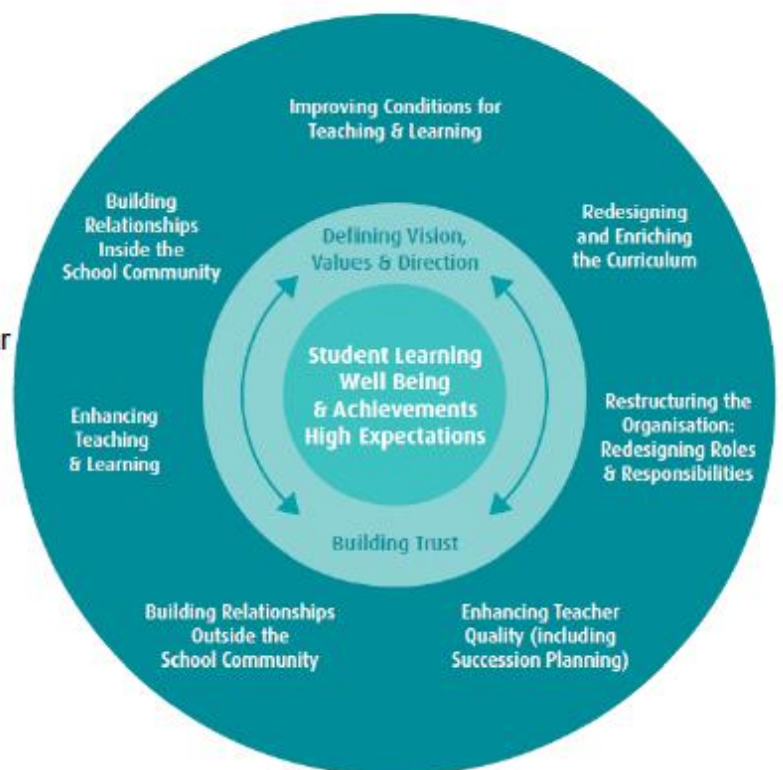
“There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p.5).

Why does school leadership matter?

- School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning (Leithwood et al., 2007; Leithwood, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020).
- Teachers working in schools with more supportive professional environments continued to improve significantly after three years, while teachers in the least supportive schools actually declined in their effectiveness (Sutton Trust, 2014).
- It enables schools to build supportive school culture and organisation and clear education goals, which are necessary to ensure the quality of teaching and learning (OECD, 2016; UNESCO, 2018; World Bank, 2018)

- School leaders play a key role in increasing the participation of community and family in school (UNICEF, 2009) and in creating synergy of all relevant forces to facilitate the development of learners (Louis et al., 2010).

Key dimensions of successful leadership (Day et al., 2011)



PROMOTING A READING CULTURE IN SCHOOLS & COMBATING LEARNING POVERTY



Why is reading important for children?

➤ Reading is a foundational skill for learning.

Acquiring basic reading skills at early grades enables children to learn other subjects with confidence and progress successfully through school.

➤ Reading is a gateway for advancing social justice.

UNESCO statistics show that children who don't read by age 10 usually fail to thrive later in school, and don't acquire the human capital they need to power their careers once they leave school. Enabling children to read holds the key to reducing learning poverty.

➤ Promoting early reading is of great value for money.

The best time to develop reading skills is in early grades. Intervening early is cost-effective in enhancing children's education outcomes, increasing their expected lifetime income from employment, and reducing major costs for future prosperity.

PROMOTING A READING CULTURE IN SCHOOLS & COMBATING LEARNING POVERTY



What can schools do?

➤ Create a culture to promote reading for joy

Increasing reading enjoyment and engagement reduces reading achievement gaps between different groups of children (e.g. socio-economic backgrounds, gender).

➤ Ensure sufficient instruction time for reading

The dedicated and explicit instruction time spent on reading ensures the opportunity for children to learn to read and practice reading.

➤ Ensure effective teaching of reading

Focusing on *how* to teach reading rather than *what* to teach works. Supporting teachers with training and providing age- and content-appropriate materials for instruction helps children to make great improvement in reading.

➤ Engage parents/carers and communities

Reading skills must be strengthened through regular practice *within* and *outside* of school. Children are more likely to achieve well in reading if they are supported at home.

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Part A: An overview of the Enabling Schools Toolkit



1. Introduction to the Enabling Schools Toolkit

1.1 What does the Enabling Schools Toolkit aim to achieve?

The Enabling Schools Toolkit is informed by a strong research-informed belief that school leaders and teachers in rural areas, together with community participation, *can* beat the odds and *enable* children to achieve and flourish despite adversity. Grounded in a holistic, philosophical approach to the “whole child” education, this whole-school intervention brings together school leaders, teachers, and Community Reading Champions to **nurture and enrich 6- to 9-year-old learners’ engagement in reading**. This will enable them to achieve a pivotal learning milestone by age 10 where they successfully transition from the foundational phase of *learning to read* to the developmental phase of *reading to learn*.

All reading materials in the Enabling Schools Toolkit are carefully selected to be fully aligned with the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Skills (Foundation Phase: Grades R to 3) in South Africa. So, *what you do* and *what your learners learn* will not be an add-on, but integral to developing the values, knowledge and skills required by CAPS.

The official “learning poverty” data from the World Bank and UNESCO show that more than half of children in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately exacerbated this learning crisis and the impact on Africa is particularly hard, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 40% of children at risk of falling victim to a life-long break on their future potential. The severity of the problem is far worse in rural primary schools where structural, social, and economic disadvantage challenges children’s access to quality education. However, we also know that the lives of many rural primary schools are enriched by hard-working teachers who are committed to



helping their learners to read and learn, dedicated leaders who aspire to lead well, and interested community members who want to support children to achieve fulfilled lives.

The Enabling Schools Toolkit was developed as part of a research study jointly led by the UCL Centre for Educational Leadership at the UCL Institute of Education (United Kingdom), and the Centre for the Study of Resilience at the University of Pretoria (South Africa). It is built upon research evidence from systematic reviews which examined interventions that were found to be successful in improving learners' learning and health in rural schools in low- and middle-income countries. It also draws upon the knowledge and expertise of an interdisciplinary research team, ranging from education, health, psychology, sociology, and health economics, to investigate how effective rural primary schools are capable of mobilising existing resources to provide added value to learners' academic progress and healthy development.

To *make good rural primary schools even better*, the Enabling Schools Toolkit provides step-by-step guidance on how school leaders, teachers and community members work together to build and foster a *“reading for enjoyment” culture* that enables children to learn better, feel happier and be healthier. This is a whole-school intervention, led and coordinated by an Enabling School Committee (ESC) comprising of school leaders, teachers (of the Foundational Phase), and school-community members ((Community Reading Champions (CRCs) and fieldworkers)) in each of the participating schools.

The overarching aim of the Enabling Schools Toolkit is to strengthen the schools' capacity to make use of available human, technical and social resources within and outside the school gate as enabling resources for better pupil learning and health outcomes. More specifically, it aims to:

- *Strengthen school leadership teams* that are committed to creating collaborative professional culture and conditions that motivate and enable teachers and CRCs to interact positively and creatively with learners to inspire their engagement in and enjoyment of reading.
- Enable school leaders, teachers, community members and learners in rural schools to *collaboratively develop a “reading for enjoyment” culture* and use it as a whole-school strategy to promote positive pupil well-being and education outcomes.
- Embed a *“reading for enjoyment” culture* in school that *improves the learning motivation and outcomes of young learners and enables them to enjoy a happier, healthier, and more confident schooling experience.*



The manual consists of three parts:

- **Part A** provides an overview of the Enabling Schools Toolkit.
- **Part B** provides an overview of school leaders' roles and activities, focusing on how they collaborate and support teachers and CRCs.
- **Part C** introduces the three phases of the "Reading Cycle" and provides an overview of teachers' and CRCs' roles and activities.

1.2 How does the Enabling Schools Toolkit benefit rural schools?

The main goal of the Enabling Schools Toolkit is to improve the wellbeing, health, and academic outcomes of Foundation Phase learners (aged 6-9 years old) in rural primary schools. School leaders, teachers, fieldworkers and CRCs will collaborate and "champion" this mission to create **playful and joyful reading practices and cultures** – using nationally recognised and freely available reading resources.

Teachers in rural primary schools need to be innovative to address a range of contextual and cultural challenges that constrain learners' learning and development. These include managing the cultural diversity within the classroom and accommodating linguistic diversity to comply with home-language instruction policies. However, the geographic placement of rural schools means that teachers are not in close proximity to access teacher professional development opportunities.

The Enabling Schools Toolkit is designed with rural school leaders' and teachers' time constraints and moral commitments in mind. The reading activities for learners will be undertaken in 30-minute Drop All and Read (DAR) (which has been officially promoted by the DBE) sessions and led by the CRCs, with the support of school leaders, teachers and fieldworkers. The resources and activities in the Toolkit have been carefully selected for CRCs, teachers, and learners so that they can be readily used in primary schools in support of the CAPS for Grades R to 3. **The themes and activities of the reading materials to be provided have been carefully selected and are fully aligned with the core content in the subject Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. The purpose is to ensure that learners are supported to develop the necessary foundational creative skills, health and well-being values, and socio-emotional competence required by the CAPS through playful and joyful reading activities.**

This means that beyond creating positive change for learners, the Enabling Schools Toolkit is developed to support *your* experience as well, whether you are a school leader, a teacher, or a community member.

- For *school leaders*, the Enabling Schools Toolkit includes four domains of research-informed practices to improve student learning. Learning about these domains and incorporating them in your practice will strengthen the effectiveness of school leadership and improve the wellbeing, health, and academic outcomes of Foundation Phase learners.



- For *teachers*, the storybooks and activities in the Enabling Schools Toolkit are fully aligned with the CAPS Life Skills requirements (integrating the social, personal, intellectual, emotional, and physical development of learners). Supporting the CRCs in using Enabling Schools Toolkit will therefore not be an add-on to your work. Rather, it will enable you to confidently meet CAPS-related requirements. As importantly, your presence and assistance in the classroom will be immensely valuable to and empower the CRCs who strive to support young learners in reading.



- *CRCs* represent role-models of cultural identities, values, beliefs, and practices that are closely connected with learners. The Enabling Schools Toolkit recognises the importance of learners' sense of belonging to their school where they feel a strong connection between "what matters" to them *inside* school and *outside* school. The CRCs thus act as the "bridge" between the school and its community and the "leader/facilitator" in the reading activities. By leading and engaging learners in classroom activities and acting as a member of the Enabling School Committee, you become a key player in cultivating an in-school reading culture that is in touch with the lifeworld of learners. In doing so, you help learners to see that their school and their community are working together to improve their academic achievement and how they feel about themselves in relation to where they come from.



- *Fieldworkers* form part of the implementation team as in-school coordinators, providing administrative support and communication links between the school community and the research team. You will assist the centralised learning dialogue sessions of principals, teachers and CRCs. As a member of the Enabling School Committee, your role is to support Foundation Phase teachers and CRCs implementing the **Reading Cycles** and undertaking **learner assessments**.



1.3 Using the Enabling Schools Toolkit to make good rural schools even better

1.3.1 Who is involved

The Enabling Schools Toolkit proposes that making good schools better can be achieved when different stakeholders of the school community come together to work towards realising

a common goal. School-community partners include school leaders, teachers, and community-members (acting as CRCs). Figure 1 illustrates the roles and responsibilities of each school-community partner.

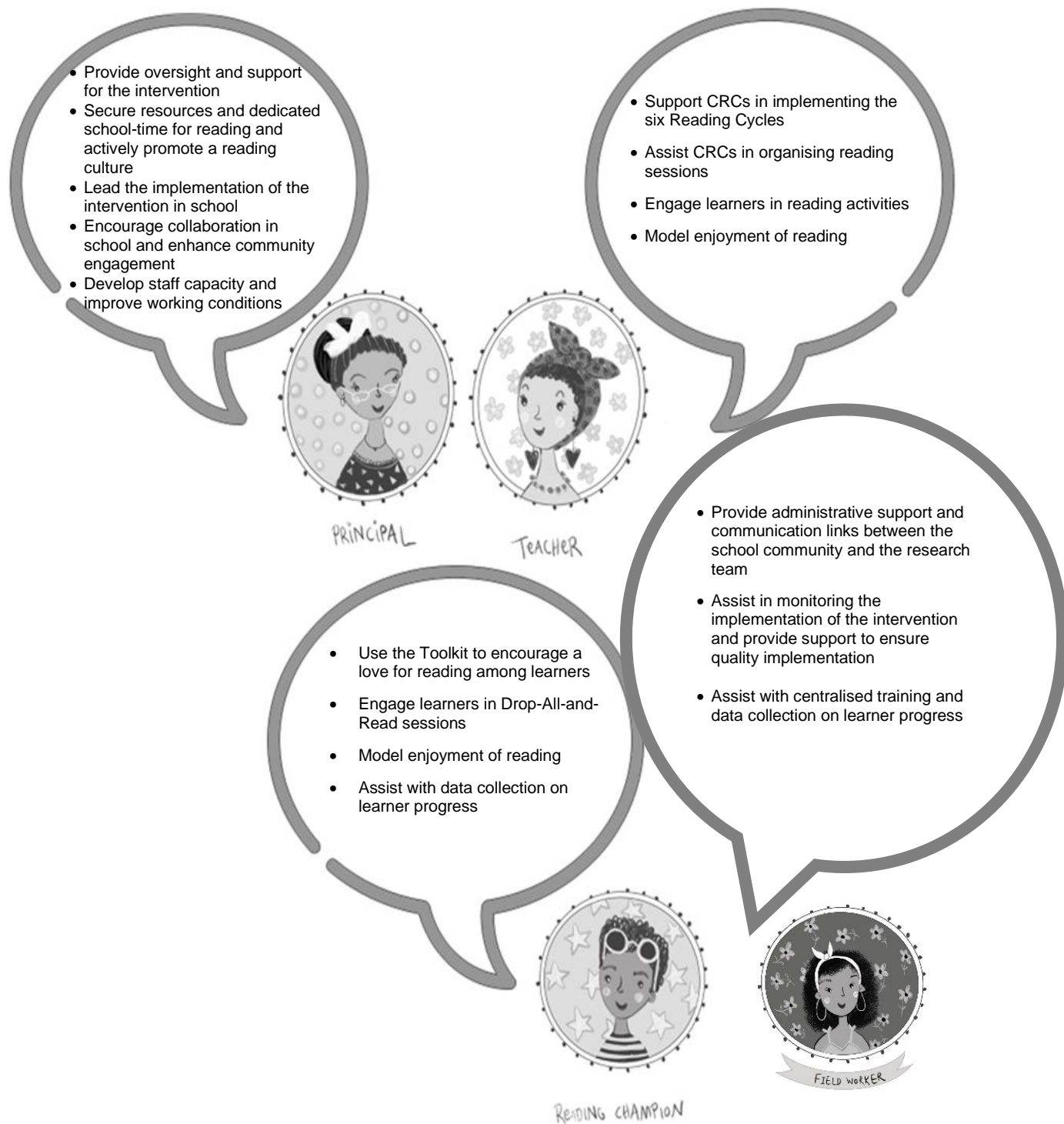


Figure 1: Enabling Schools Toolkit partner roles and responsibilities

1.3.2 How is the Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual useful for school leaders?

The Enabling School Toolkit Manual is designed to:

- Assist school leadership teams to plan, schedule and monitor activities required for the successful implementation of the Enabling Schools Toolkit.
- Guide school leaders to use research-informed impactful leadership practices to improve the capacity of teachers and CRCs for improving learners' enjoyment of reading.
- Provide guidance on how to create a school environment that supports and nurtures learners' enjoyment of reading.
- Assist school leadership teams to collaborate with community stakeholders to maximise the use of available human, social and technical resources inside and outside school to build a "*reading for enjoyment*" culture.

1.3.3 How is the Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual useful for teachers and CRCs?

The Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual will:

- Provide teachers and CRCs with accessible and curriculum-friendly stories and activities that are fully aligned to national academic outcomes.
- Enable teachers and CRCs to share and enjoy storytelling through playful activities.
- Provide strategies for creating fun and meaningful reading environments and cultures where different stakeholders work together for a common goal.
- Demonstrate how teachers and CRCs can work together with school leaders to meet the needs of the school community.



2. The Most Commonly Asked Questions

2.1 What is the Enabling Schools Toolkit?

The Toolkit presents a **four-step intervention process** that helps schools and their communities to create a collaborative school environment which nurtures 6- to 9-year-old learners' enjoyment of reading. Such environment develops the values and skills required for children to learn better, feel happier and stay healthier.

This Manual gives you an overview of what the Enabling Schools Toolkit contains and your roles as leaders, teachers, fieldworkers, or CRCs in the intervention.

2.2 How does the Enabling Schools Toolkit work?

The Enabling School Toolkit has four steps (see Figure 2). The implementation of the whole school-based intervention will take seven months, including 6 Reading Cycles over a five-month period.¹

Each Reading Cycle spans over three weeks, including ten structured 30-minute DAR sessions. Some schools may need longer to complete all the tasks designed for each reading cycle. We have therefore included extra time for the six Reading Cycles (Step 3 in Figure 2).

Before the commencement of the intervention, the research team will organise centralised learning dialogue sessions for principals, Foundation Phase teachers, fieldworkers, and CRCs respectively – modelling sessions for the Reading Cycles and assisting schools to prepare for the intervention.

During the implementation period, the research team will provide centralised learning dialogue sessions and support. The team will also visit your school at the beginning and the end of the implementation period.

| Activities | Month 1 | Month 2 | Month 3 | Month 4 | Month 5 | Month 6 | Month 7 |
|---|---------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Centralised Learning Dialogue (CLD) | | | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESC meets researchers • Baseline assessment • Launch of intervention | | | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement 6 Reading Cycles | | Reading Cycle 1 → Reading Cycle 2 → Reading Cycle 3 → Reading Cycle 4 → Reading Cycle 5 → Reading Cycle 6 | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly ESC meeting | | | | | | | |
| Monthly centralised learning dialogue catch up | | | | | | | |

¹ The implementation timeline serves as a guideline for the intervention and is subject to change according to local research contexts and conditions such as exam days and public holidays.

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESC meets researchers • Endline assessment • Establish a mini library | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Figure 3 presents an overview of the implementation schedule.

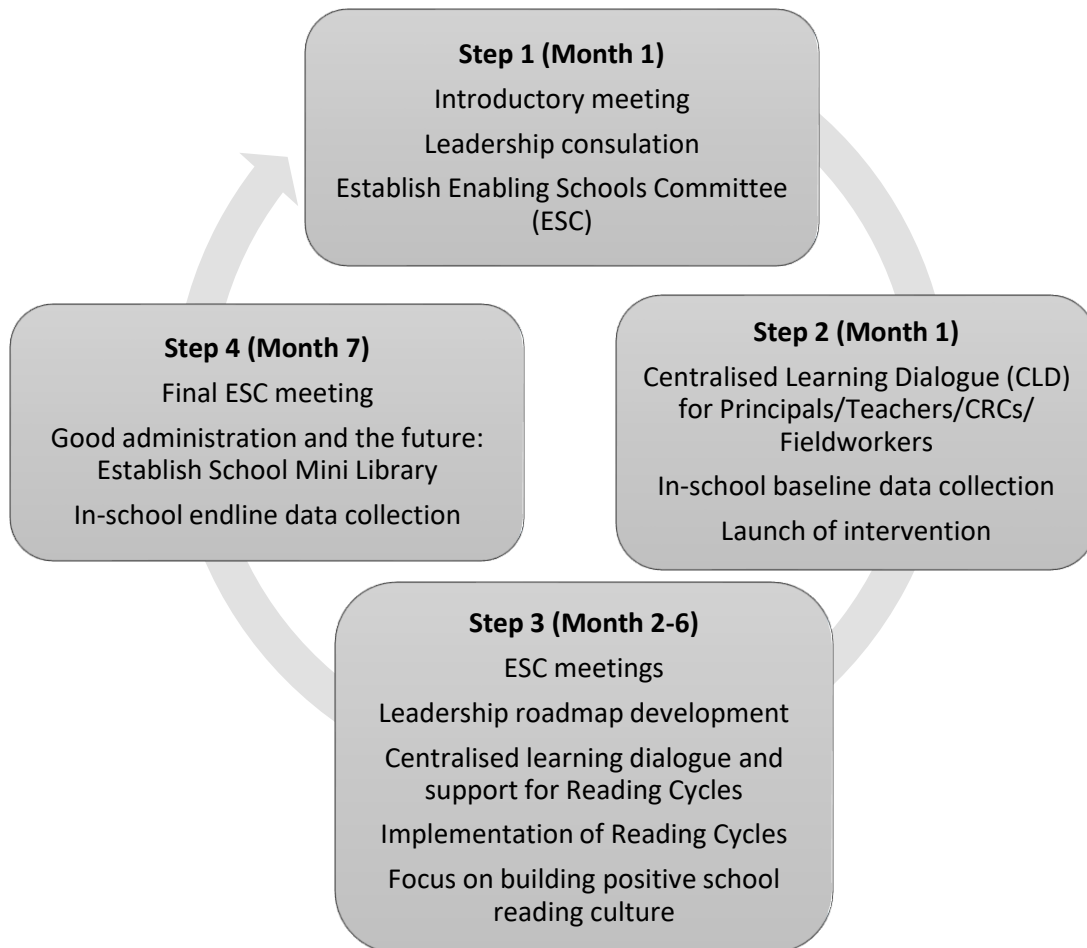


Figure 2: Summary of the four steps of the Enabling Schools Toolkit

| Activities | Month 1 | Month 2 | Month 3 | Month 4 | Month 5 | Month 6 | Month 7 |
|--|---------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Centralised Learning Dialogue (CLD) | | | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESC meets researchers • Baseline assessment • Launch of intervention | | | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement 6 Reading Cycles | | Reading Cycle 1 → Reading Cycle 2 → Reading Cycle 3 → Reading Cycle 4 → Reading Cycle 5 → Reading Cycle 6 | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly ESC meeting | | | | | | | |
| Monthly centralised learning dialogue catch up | | | | | | | |
| In school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESC meets researchers • Endline assessment • Establish a mini library | | | | | | | |

Figure 3: Overview of the implementation schedule of Enabling Schools Toolkit

2.3 Who will do the work?

The school leadership team, Foundation Phase teachers, and CRCs in the Enabling Schools Committee (ESC) will do the work! (Please refer to *Section 3. The Enabling School Committee (ESC), page 10*). The ESC will coordinate the activities and share the ideas introduced in each step. Foundation Phase learners, their teachers, and CRCs will participate in Reading Cycles.

2.4 How will we know what to do?

Every activity is outlined in detail in this manual for school leaders, teachers, fieldworkers, and CRCs. You'll find easy-to-follow instructions, monitoring checklists and ready-made materials. You will follow the four-step process step-by-step from beginning to end (see Figure 2).

2.5 What resources will we need?

You do not need any special resources or a large budget to implement the Enabling Schools Toolkit. You just need the **desire** to build and enhance the reading culture at your school and have commitment to this goal.

2.5.1 What will be provided by the Enabling Schools Toolkit?

- 1) Storybooks, which are resourced from African Storybook and Book Dash, will be provided as materials for CRCs to read with the learners.
- 2) Guidelines for activities will be provided by the Enabling Schools Toolkit manuals.

2.6 What if we need help?

You will be encouraged to join WhatsApp groups so that you can share concerns, success stories, queries, and ideas with one another, and with the research team.

3. The Enabling School Committee (ESC)

3.1 Introducing the ESC

3.1.1 What is the ESC?

A key element of the Enabling Schools Toolkit is the ESC: a collaborative team comprising of school leaders, Foundation Phase teachers, a fieldworker, and CRCs. They will plan, organise, and carry out the intervention activities together.



3.1.2 Why is the ESC important?

The purpose of establishing an ESC is to bring key representatives of the school community together so that activities can be coordinated and supported across the school and its community. Through the ESC, all relevant stakeholders in the school community will work together to drive this intervention which is designed to foster a “*reading for enjoyment*” culture in the school.

3.1.3 Who will be involved in the ESC?

The ESC should include at least two representatives from the school leadership team, all the Foundation Phase teachers, an equal number of CRCs, and a fieldworker so that each CRC can be paired with and supported by a teacher in this intervention.

3.1.4 How will the ESC establish and implement their roles and responsibilities?

The ESC will meet **monthly** at their individual schools to fulfil two important roles and responsibilities:

- 1) *Planning* the intervention activities and logistics for the month ahead.
- 2) *Having reflective conversations* to discuss the events that have taken place and what can be learned from the progress to date.

3.2 What the ESC does: Monthly meeting for planning and reflective conversations

During the intervention period, each month always starts with an ESC meeting which lasts about one and a half hours. In this meeting, all members of your school’s ESC will come together to discuss and plan the activities that will be carried out over the coming month and create a complete roadmap of the work ahead. This will allow everyone to know their role from the start, so they can get to work right away.

Broadly, the planning will be structured around coordinating the **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, HOW** for each activity of the intervention. If you are curious about what this might look like, kindly find an example below:

Say, for instance, that your ESC planning is focused on the logistics of carrying out a “Reading Cycle”, you will establish things like:

- **WHO** will do the planning?

Teachers and CRC partners will lead the planning and CRCs will carry out the Reading Cycle with their learners in the 30-minute DAR sessions.

- **WHO** will oversee the planning?

A member of the school leadership team (such as principal, or deputy principal) will have oversight of planning to ensure that everything is in place for these activities to occur.

- **WHAT** is to be achieved from the planning?

During the meeting, the ESC will establish the tasks that need to be completed in preparation for the Reading Cycle activities. The team will also provide you in advance with the training on the planning and the resources that you need to implement these activities.

- **HOW** will the planning meeting take place?

In the monthly centralised learning dialogue sessions, the research team will “model” how the activities will be conducted. If there is a need to do things differently from how the research team has planned them, then this will be arranged during the planning meeting. Should you have any questions, please feel free to discuss with the research team when you attend the centralised learning dialogue sessions or in the WhatsApp group.

- **WHEN will the planning** be implemented?

We understand the challenges in school to set aside time to implement intervention activities because of other work commitments. During the centralised learning dialogue sessions, researchers will assist the principals to coordinate the schedules of all ESC members to ensure that time can be allocated to the tasks in ways that are fair, manageable, and flexible to everyone.

In the monthly ESC meeting, besides the planning that focuses on the activities of the intervention, the ESC members will also have reflective conversations. The purpose of these conversations is to create a space where school leaders, teachers, and CRCs come together



to reflect on and learn from what has taken place over the past month and to consider necessary changes and new ideas for the month ahead.

Enabling Schools Toolkit

Leadership Manual



Part B: Focusing on School Leadership in the Enabling Schools Toolkit

4. Why School Leadership Matters

In the following, we focus on your roles as school leaders and your activities in this intervention. The leadership roles and activities are rooted in four research-informed domains which will be elaborated on in more detail in *Section 6. Introduction to the Four Domains of Effective School Leadership, page 17.*

Underlining the fundamental importance of getting learners prepared and motivated to learn through early childhood education for their future, the World Bank's Approach (2019) to improving education proposes that collective efforts of agencies shall be in place. It also suggests ensuring teachers are effective with support for continuous professional development; equipping classrooms with explicit and effective curriculum, quality reading materials, and structured pedagogy; and creating safe as well as inclusive school spaces (World Bank 2019).

In light of these highlighted areas, ***only with school leadership recognition and support*** can teachers and Community Reading Champions (CRCs) dedicate and collaborate throughout the process. By working together in this way, it makes us stronger and sets a strong foundation for creating an enabling school environment.

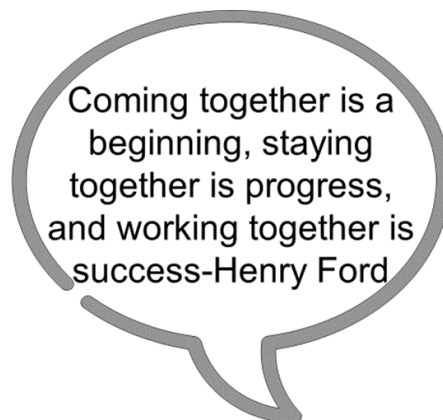


Figure 4: Illustration of leadership practices found to be effective when working in schools



SEVEN STRONG CLAIMS

1. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.
2. Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
3. The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.
4. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.
5. School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.
6. Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.
7. A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.

Figure 5: Seven strong leadership claims (Leithwood et al., 2008)

4.1 What is the role of school leadership in this whole-school intervention?

Strong school leadership motivates staff members to respond to innovations for change and improvement in meaningful and productive ways. To enable such response, school leaders create and sustain opportunities that are appropriate and responsive to teachers' individual and collective professional learning and development needs. Moreover, they provide the necessary human, technical and social resources to build the right working conditions and environments that strengthen the school's collective capacity for change and improvement. These leadership roles are key to bringing about the intended outcomes of student learning and development.

4.2. School leadership, teachers, and CRCs work in collaboration: one cannot thrive without the other

The advantage of having school leaders, teachers, and CRCs working together is that learners will be supported by a multi-talented team bringing together visionary leadership, expert teaching practices and community values, identity, and aspirations.

5. The Importance of Reading for Enjoyment

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As school leaders, your primary role in this intervention is to promote and support the teachers and CRCs to prioritise a culture of *reading for enjoyment* in their classrooms. Reading is a foundational skill for learners because it is a gateway for their academic and psychosocial development. Learners receive instructions through written text in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. Being able to read is thus critical to a learner's ability to learn, understand and communicate with other people. Reading is not just a functional capability, however. It is also a pleasurable activity that impacts positively on learners' academic performance and personal development.

It is important that children acquire reading skills during their early developmental years. This is because reading forms the basis of children's ability to understand instructions. A failure to acquire reading skills in their foundational years could lead to their learning progress being stifled as they struggled to comprehend basic instructions. Children's reading during their early developmental years also contributes to the formation of their imagination/pretend play which helps them synthesise knowledge and build their emotional intelligence. Regular reading during children's early developmental years stimulates children's cognition, increases their ability to concentrate, and enhances their communication skills.

When children read, they are not passively internalising information. They have the capacity to make sense of what they read. Reading stimulates children's curiosity and encourages them to express their own opinions and voice their ideas. In essence, reading entails an exciting process of *gaining knowledge* as well as *co-creating knowledge*.

Therefore, we encourage you as leaders to promote positive practices through building capacity amongst your staff and nurture a conducive learning and working environment that

harnesses the commitment and motivation of all the stakeholders. We will discuss these domains in more detail in Section 6 below.

5.1 Benefits of Reading for Enjoyment

- Stimulating children’s engagement in reading
- Increasing children’s general knowledge, grammar, and textual comprehension
- Developing children’s social and emotional skills and confidence
- Improving children’s understanding of and abilities to build relationships with others
- Fostering and developing creativity in everyday activities

6. Introduction to the Four Domains of Effective School Leadership

Creating a culture of *reading for enjoyment* requires collective efforts from school leaders, teachers, and community members. Key in this regard is to build a strong sense of belonging and vision within the school and its community which nurtures learners’ well-being, knowledge and skills to succeed and thrive in the world. A central aim of the Enabling Schools Toolkit is to support school leaders to set directions and establish expectations, build internal and external relationships, develop people, and improve collaboration in learning and teaching. Put differently, *leaders will be able to inspire learners to feel confident about themselves and where they come from, enjoy healthy and happy childhood development and academic success, and have the ability to cope with life’s challenges more resiliently.*

Figure 6 is adapted from the model in Leithwood and Jantzi’s (2006) study to incorporate leadership practices and outcomes that are relevant to the Enabling Schools Toolkit. The **four domains of leadership practices** are key to improving the necessary in-school cultures, conditions, and capacity for successful implementation of the Enabling Schools Toolkit. The diagram presupposes that school principals work in collaboration with their leadership teams in fulfilling their roles of supporting teachers and CRCs to build a positive reading culture in their schools.

The **three areas of change** in Figure 6 are staff capacity, staff motivation and commitment, and working conditions. Collectively these areas form a core focus for effective school leadership that aims to harness the social and intellectual connections between school leaders, teachers, and CRCs. As school leaders, your leadership practices and inspiration will be driving this process of change to create the right conditions for a school-wide reading culture.

Effective Leadership Practices

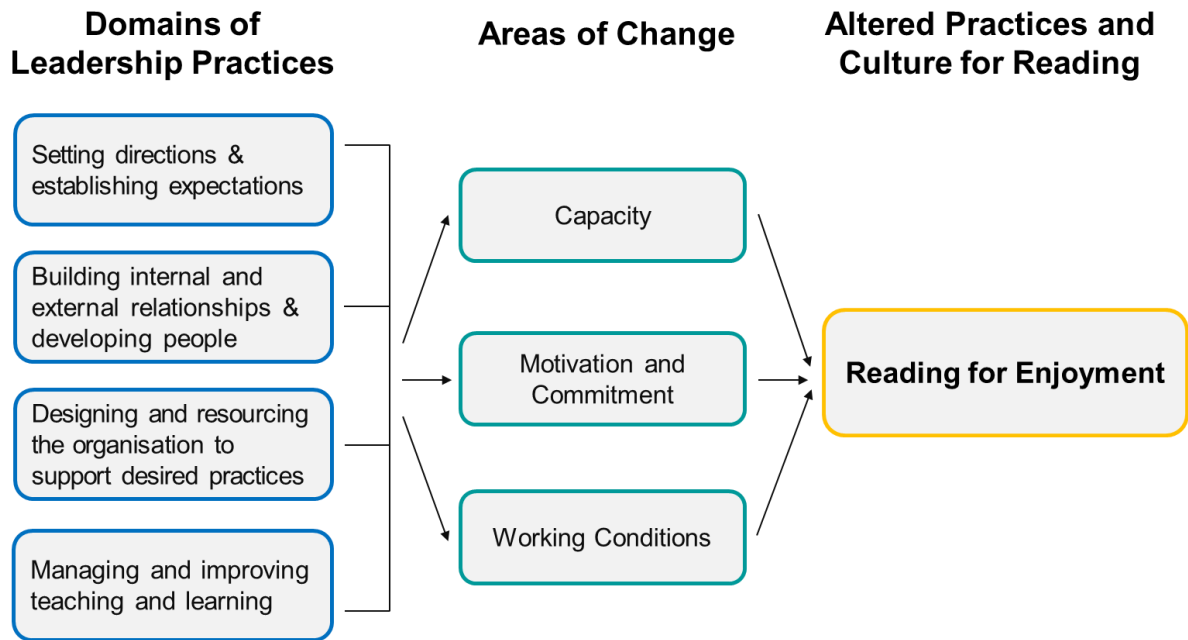


Figure 6: Effective leadership practices

Figure 7 below defines the meaning of each of the areas of change in Figure 6.

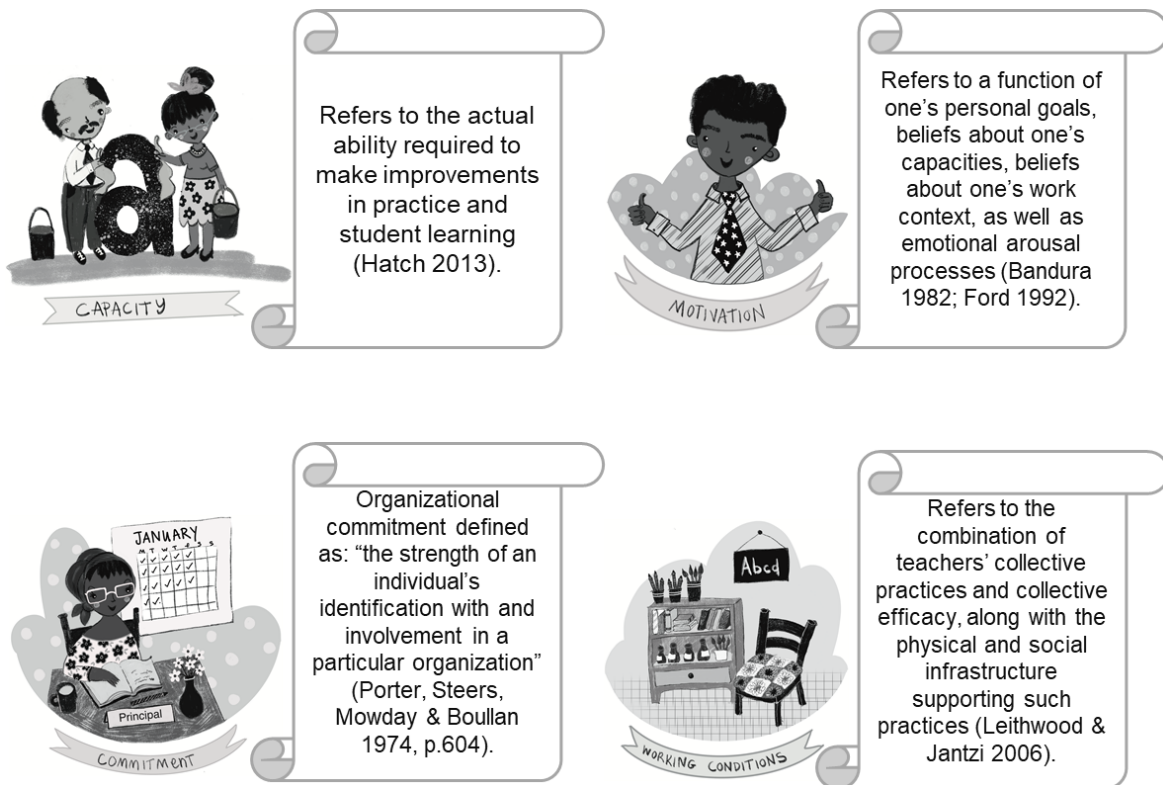



Figure 7: Areas of change



The core leadership practices, and their respective activities are presented in Table 1 below. Informed by Leithwood (2019), these four domains of practice indicate **key functions of leaders** as assisting their teachers, other organisational colleagues, and CRCs to further develop their **motivations** (one of the primary purposes for Setting Directions) and **abilities** (the purpose for Building Relationships and Developing People) to accomplish organisational goals, as well as to create and sustain **supportive and collaborative work settings** for improved culture and practice of reading.


Establishing, with teachers and CRCs, a **shared vision** for a school-wide positive reading culture to which they are all fully committed is the first step toward accomplishing the goals for reading. Engaging teachers and CRCs in this vision building process helps to ensure that they understand the specific implications of the school’s vision for their practice and encourages the development of an organisational norm that supports openness to change in the direction of embedding a “reading-for-enjoyment” culture in school. It is within this process that you, as a leader, motivate and inspire your colleagues as a leader to aspire to the same goals and objectives.

Building relationships and **developing people** provides the necessary professional capacities for embedding a new culture of reading. Giving staff individual support and modelling professional practices and values can harness the power of trust and care between you and your staff as a leader. In addition, facilitating opportunities for staff to learn from each other and recognising their achievements will increase the morale in the team and stimulate growth in knowledge, skills, and capacity. Bridging community support through developing good relationships with parents and engaging CRCs further extends the integrity of the school as a whole.

Table 1: Core practices and descriptions of effective school leadership

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>The illustration shows a man in a white shirt and tie, labeled 'LEADER', pointing towards a sign that says 'SET DIRECTION'. The sign is on a banner and has an arrow pointing to the right.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use many different formal and informal opportunities to explain the overall vision of building a <i>reading-for-enjoyment</i> culture in school (school and community). 2. Identify specific, shared, short-term goals to develop a roadmap for achieving a reading culture in school. 3. Demonstrate to all stakeholders what the school’s vision for reading means in practice. 4. Have high expectations for teachers, for learners and for themselves. |
|--|--|

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>5. Regularly invite teachers, CRCs, the fieldworker, and learners to describe how their work furthers the school's vision for reading.</p> |
|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exemplify, through your own actions, the school's core values and many of its desired practices. 2. Challenge staff to re-examine the extent to which, and in what ways, their practices contribute to the learning and wellbeing of all their learners. 3. Encourage staff to consider new ideas for their teaching and lead discussions about the relative merits of current and alternative practices. 4. Facilitate opportunities for them to learn from each other. 5. Recognise individual staff members' accomplishments and respond to individual staff members' unique needs and expertise. 6. Encourage teachers, learners, CRCs, the fieldworker, and parents to listen to one another's ideas and genuinely consider their value. |
|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distribute resources of all types (i.e. material, technical and human resources) in ways that are closely aligned with the school's vision to build a reading culture. 2. Help develop clarity about goals and roles for collaboration and the shared determination of group processes and outcomes. 3. Provide adequate and consistent resources in support of collaborative work. 4. Ensure wide staff participation in decisions and actions about how to build a reading-for-enjoyment culture in school. 5. Establish team and group structures for problem solving and participate with staff in their collective work on improving the culture of reading in school. 6. Increase dialogue about improving the reading culture between learners and adults. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Create a school environment in which parents are welcomed, respected, and valued as partners in their children’s learning. 8. Utilise knowledge and skills of CRCs and parents to support learners’ engagement in reading. |
|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure dedicated staff time for collaboration and planning to implement the Reading Cycles and build a reading culture. 2. Actively oversee the implementation and progress of the Reading Cycles and being a useful source of advice to teachers and CRCs about how to solve problems in the classroom. 3. Engage teachers and CRCs in observing effective practices for enacting the Reading Cycles amongst colleagues. 4. Use multiple sources of evidence to monitor learners’ learning and engagement in reading activities. 5. Minimise daily disruptions to classroom time for learning. 6. Assist staff to better use the social and intellectual capital of learners from diverse backgrounds to engage them in reading. |

7. Planned Steps for School Leaders

Now that the four domains of leadership practices have been explained, this Section outlines the focuses of actions that the research team will assist school leaders in implementing the Enabling Schools Toolkit in the Foundation Phase at each step over the intervention. The list of suggested leadership actions is not exhaustive and school leaders are encouraged to share their own experiences and practices to ensure that the actions are relevant and responsive to the needs of the learners, teachers, and the school.



7.1 Principals' actions to create a culture of *reading for enjoyment*

Month 1

Step 1: Establishing the vision and directions

The school leadership team will first focus the following actions to set a shared vision for a reading culture in the Foundation Phase of the school:

- Motivating staff by sharing the learning benefits of the Enabling Schools Toolkit as highlighted at the outset of the Manual: “School leadership matters” and “Promoting a reading culture in schools and combating learning poverty”.
- Securing staff commitment by pledging the buy-in from the school leadership.
- Creating time, space, and resources for shared ownership by enabling teachers and CRCs to actively participate in and contribute to the development of the roadmap to implement the Enabling Schools Toolkit.
- Creating the working conditions that will allow for the smooth implementation of the Reading Cycles outlined in the Manual.
- Taking a lead role in forming, promoting, and launching the ESC (securing motivation and commitment).

Step 2: Establishing organisational support

The school leadership team will focus the following actions to establish organisational support for building a reading culture in school:

- Demonstrating your support of the ESC, leading and facilitating opportunities for members of ESC to participate in monthly committee meetings, clarifying goals and roles for participation, and identifying specific priorities and actions to refine and enact the roadmap (securing motivation and commitment).
- Supporting the research team to establish a rapport with the ESC as they meet the ESC and introduce the Enabling Schools Toolkit.
- Supporting researchers to collect baseline data with school leaders, teachers, learners, fieldworkers, and CRCs.

Months 2 to 6

Step 3: Enabling sustained collaboration for improved practice

The school leadership team will focus on the following actions:

- Observing classroom instructions, conducting “learning walks”, and providing constructive feedback to CRCs and teachers (capacity building).
- Establishing team and group structures for problem solving and ensuring there are no disruptions to classroom time for learning (enhancing working conditions).
- Ensuring all necessary material, technical and human resources are provided for successful enactment of the reading cycles (enhancing working conditions).
- Engaging in monthly ESC planning meetings and reflective conversations together with teachers, the fieldworker, and CRCs to discuss and plan the reading activities that will be carried out over the coming month and to re-examine the extent to which, and in what ways, the implementation of the Reading Cycles has worked and why (building capacity).

Month 7

Step 4: Embedding culture, practice, and success, and envisaging the future

The school leadership team will be focussing on the following:

- Supporting the establishment of a mini library where learners’ storybooks will be promoted, celebrated, and widely shared amongst learners within and across the participating schools (motivation and commitment).
- Supporting the establishment of a reading wall where stories can be displayed (enhancing teaching and learning conditions, motivation).
- Providing constructive comments for learners to celebrate their progress and achievements from their participation in reading circles (motivation).
- Using school assemblies and other events to celebrate the completion/launch of learners’ storybooks, share selected readings, and reward learners who are excelling in reading (motivation and school environment).
- Engaging in regular reflective conversations with teachers, the fieldworker and CRCs (building capacity).
- Supporting researchers to collect post-intervention data (capacity building).
- Organising and inviting all stakeholders (including parents, community leaders, circuit managers, local media) to the official celebration and launch of a mini library for the storybooks written by Foundation Phase learners (commitment and motivation).



- Leading an ESC session with researchers to inspire everyone with what you have accomplished together towards establishing a *reading-for-enjoyment* culture in the Foundation Phase, reflect on what you could have done better together, and envisage a renewed vision for the future (capacity building and motivation).

Table 2 below provides a summary of the main activities at each of the four intervention steps.

Table 2: The school leadership team’s main activities over the intervention

| Steps for School Leaders | Key Activities |
|---|--|
| Step 1: Establishing the vision, directions | Meet the school leadership team to clarify the purpose of the Enabling Schools Toolkit, secure their buy-in and commitment, conduct leadership training and develop the roadmap. Set up the ESC. |
| Step 2: Establishing organisational support | The school leadership team endorses the ESC and refines the roadmap with the ESC and the research team. Launch the Enabling Schools Toolkit in school and support the research team’s baseline data collection activity. |
| Step 3: Enabling sustained collaboration for improved practice | Facilitate and support the enactment of the Reading Cycles in the Foundation Phase. Provide adequate and consistent resources and build collaborative school environments that enable teachers and CRCs to remain motivated and committed to following the roadmap and achieving the school’s vision for reading. |
| Step 4: Embedding culture, practice, and success, and envisaging the future | Prepare for the launch of the learners’ mini library. Provide the necessary resources to create school-wide opportunities for the celebration of achievements. Embed a culture of celebration in which learners’ storybooks are read and shared and effort and achievements are recognised and awarded. Bring together the ESC and all related stakeholders to launch the mini library. Inspire everyone with what they have accomplished and envisage a renewed vision for the future. Support the research team to collect post-intervention data. |

7.2 Practical examples on how school leaders may support the implementation of the Enabling Schools Toolkit

Actions that may enable school leaders to build and sustain a culture of reading:

- Using the evidence on *why reading matters* to explain to teachers, learners, and CRCs why the school has set the vision to build a *reading-for-enjoyment* culture, especially in the Foundation Phase initially.
- Pointing out that the Enabling Schools Toolkit intends to improve not only learners' experiences of reading but also their education and wellbeing understanding and skills that are outlined in the CAPS document.
- Having a welcoming and inclusive approach to all the partners and recognising the unique value each will be contributing to the project.
- Demonstrating a united front to the partners, i.e. the school has endorsed the project fully and is working in close partnership with the researchers. The Enabling Schools Toolkit is not an "external intervention", but *our school's* intervention that will benefit the learning and wellbeing experience of our learners.
- Providing assurance to the partners that the researchers will be working in close partnership to support teachers and CRCs along the way.

Actions that may enable school leaders to support collaboration between teachers and CRCs to promote a culture of reading-for-enjoyment:

- Observing sessions of at least one complete Reading Cycle and regularly invite learners, teachers, and CRCs to describe "*what has worked well*" and what they could have done better (i.e. "*even better if...*"). Celebrate the completion of the storybooks with all learners, teachers, and CRCs at the end of each Reading Cycle.
- Encouraging teachers and CRCs to identify how learners interact with the reading materials and re-examine the extent to which, and in what ways, their practices may be adapted to enhance learners' engagement of the reading materials and acquire the related Life Skills that are embedded in each of the storybooks.
- Ensuring that the time and resources required are in place for the completion of the Reading Cycles. We have suggested in Part C that the Reading Cycles are built into the school curriculum timetable so that they do not compete with other school activities.

Actions that may enable school leaders to build conditions and cultures that encourage learners to create storybooks with their teachers, CRCs and peers:

- Ensuring all necessary resources (e.g. bookshelves, books, crayon) are provided to support the establishment of a mini-library in school towards the end of the intervention.
- Creating space in the timetable to encourage learners to spend time in the mini-library—sharing their storybooks with their friends and talking about their favourite storybooks.
- Challenging teachers and CRCs to reflect on their classroom instructions in the Reading Cycle sessions, listen to one another's ideas and genuinely consider their value in enabling learners to better enjoy the creation of their own storybooks.

Actions that may enable school leaders to scale up the Enabling Schools Toolkit to the whole school:

- Invite all related stakeholders to the launch of the mini library including parents, community leaders, district officials, local media, union representatives and businesspeople. Celebrate learners', CRCs' and teachers' achievements and share their experiences of using structured reading activities to inspire learning and nurture wellbeing.
- Encourage existing members of the ESC to become champions of the Enabling Schools Toolkit who will lead the enactment of the Toolkit with their colleagues in the new academic year. Re-elect new members if need be.
- Encourage staff to consider how the roadmap to a reading culture may be adapted for the new academic year. Establish regular whole-school events to share story reading and celebrate achievements in reading and learning.

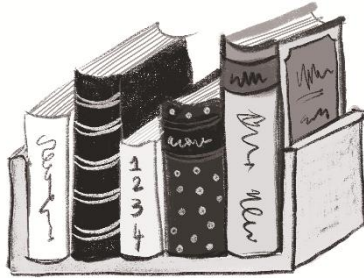


Enabling Schools Toolkit

Reading Cycles Manual



Part C: Focusing on Teachers and Community Reading Champions in the Enabling Schools Toolkit



8. Joyful Reading

In the following, we focus on your roles and activities in the Enabling Schools intervention as teachers and Community Reading Champions (CRCs). The reason why we have structured the document in this way is because we have designed the intervention so that teachers and CRCs collaborate as “partners” who work together throughout the intervention. Each CRC will be paired with one teacher, so that as a team you can plan the Drop All and Read (DAR) sessions together according to your learners’ needs, and classroom activities in the DAR sessions can be led by CRCs with teachers’ professional support.

The advantage of having both teachers and CRCs working together is that the experiences and strengths of both of you are drawn on to make the intervention cooperative and efficient. Learners will be encouraged by members of the community who have knowledge of their lifeworld and reflect the values, identity, and beliefs that exist outside of the confines of the school, whilst also being supported by teachers who are experts in early childhood education. We believe that working together in this way makes us stronger and sets the foundation for creating an enabling school environment.

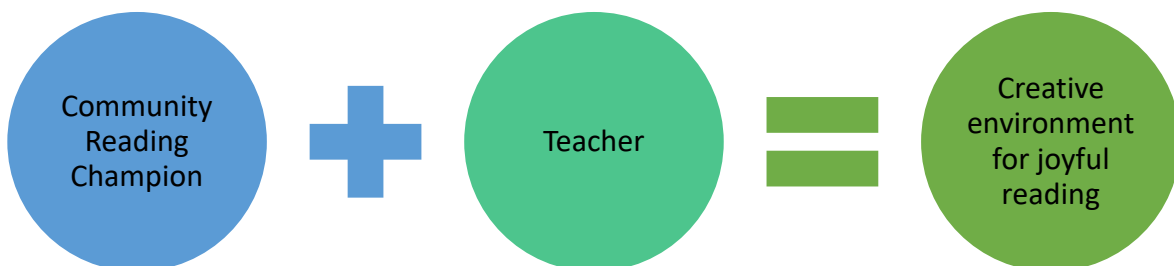


Figure 8: CRCs and teachers work in collaboration: one cannot thrive without the other

8.1 The importance of reading for enjoyment

As teacher and CRC partners, you play an important role in this intervention by promoting a culture of reading for enjoyment. As you know, reading is a foundational skill for learners because it is a gateway for their academic and psychosocial development. Learners receive instructions through written text in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. Being able to read is thus critical to a learner's ability to learn, understand and communicate with other people. Reading is not just a functional capability. It is also a pleasurable activity that positively impacts academic performance and personal development.

It is important for children to acquire reading skills during their early developmental years because reading forms the basis of children's ability to understand instructions. A failure to acquire reading skills in children's foundational years could lead to their progress being stifled because they cannot comprehend basic instructions. Children's reading during their early developmental years also contributes to the formation of their imagination/pretend play which helps children synthesise knowledge and build their emotional intelligence. Regular reading during children's early developmental years stimulates children's cognition, increases their ability to concentrate and it promotes their communication skills.

When children read, they are not passively internalising information. Children have the capacity to make their own meaning of what they read. Reading encourages children to express their own voices by eliciting curiosity. Children are able to voice their opinions and ideas about what they are reading. This makes for a very exciting process of both gaining knowledge and co-creating knowledge.

8.2 Benefits of reading for enjoyment

- Facilitating engagement in reading
- Increasing general knowledge, grammar, and textual comprehension
- Developing social and emotional skills
- Improving relationships with others and reducing feelings of low mood
- Fostering and developing creativity in everyday activities

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9. The Three-Phase Enabling Schools Toolkit “Reading Cycle”

9.1 Introducing the Enabling Schools Toolkit “Reading Cycle”



"One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world."

- Malala's Magic Pencil by Malala Yousafzai

The Enabling Schools Intervention Reading Cycle is a core focus within the Enabling Schools Intervention that aims to create a joyful reading culture in classrooms for Foundation Phase learners in rural primary schools in South Africa. As teacher and CRC partners, you will be driving this component of the intervention using our carefully selected resources and activities that are structured according to a three-phase reading cycle (which we will demonstrate in detail in the pages to follow).

Teachers and CRCs will collaborate and “champion” this mission for playful and joyful reading practices with the use of nationally recognised and freely available reading resources.

We understand that South African teachers face tremendous responsibilities and time constraints. Therefore, we have chosen resources and developed techniques that can be readily used within classrooms alongside the Foundation Phase CAPS curriculum. The provided reading materials have been carefully selected to align with the national CAPS curriculum in addition to their thematic relevance to improving learners’ socio-emotional, academic and health outcomes.

9.2 What does the Enabling Schools Toolkit “Reading Cycle” look like?

The Enabling Schools Intervention’s “Reading Cycle” is a **three-phase process** that focuses on deeply engaging with **one** storybook at a time in order to create an enriching and fun storytelling experience. The three phases of the process entail: (1) **Creating foundations** (1.5 hour), (2) **Engaging and understanding** (0.5 hour) and (3) **Creativity and meaning making** (3 hours). At the end of each Reading Cycle, the class will have completed: (1) reading the

selected core storybook, and (2) creating a storybook of their own. We will explain each of the above processes in the Sections below. The Reading Cycle ends with a book sharing celebration session (1 hour).

Each Reading Cycle spans over a **three-week period**. During the three weeks, the Reading Cycle activities will take a total of **ten** 30-minute DAR sessions to complete. As a teacher and CRC team, you can sit together to plan the ten sessions and decide how these sessions will be scheduled over the three weeks. Kindly refer to *Example of setting up a “Reading Cycle” schedule on page 79* in *The Enabling Schools Reading Cycles Manual* for a breakdown of how to schedule your Reading Cycle sessions. Depending on your school’s curriculum arrangement, if time allows, you could also add more DAR sessions to the three-week period for learners to enjoy the provided supplementary storybooks (see *Section 3.4 Supplementary storybooks and discussion prompts for Enabling Schools Toolkit on page 84* in *The Enabling Schools Reading Cycles Manual*).

The intervention is structured around **six core storybooks**, each of which has its own “Reading Cycle” activities. Overall, our five-month core intervention period will allow for six reading cycles to take place. Kindly refer to the overview of the intervention timeline on page 6 if you need a reminder of how this works.

As you can see, the Reading Cycle has a number of aspects that work hand-in-hand in a particular order. Although it may seem confusing at first, please **don’t worry!** We will be with you through the introduction of this process by having detailed monthly centralised learning dialogue sessions in our training. These centralised learning dialogue weeks will be attended by principals, teachers, and CRCs from all participating schools. There will also be WhatsApp groups where you can communicate with your colleagues on your progress, concerns, and questions, as well as receive support from the research team.

Please go to *The Enabling Schools Reading Cycles Manual* for step-by-step instructions.

Glossary of Definitions for Enabling Schools Intervention

African Storybook: An online platform with open-access picture storybooks in numerous languages.

Baseline assessment: Test done at the beginning of the intervention to evaluate learner's proficiency level and health status; used to identify learner development throughout the intervention.

Beginning Knowledge: A study area consisting of various topics including Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Technology.

Book Dash: A South African publishing house for free children's storybooks.

Brain-break activities: Activities that aim to calm and focus the learner to help them learn better.

Centralised Learning Dialogue: Specific days dedicated to providing information and guidance with the aim of assisting relevant stakeholders in successfully implementing the intervention.

Collaboration: Working with someone, or as a team, to reach an end goal

Community Reading Champion (CRC): A community member (parent, sibling, community leader, grandparent, etc.) that has a passion for reading and wants to spread the joy of reading.

Communication skills: The ability to express and share feelings and ideas with others.

Community: A group of individuals that have a common purpose, goal, values and work together to achieve them for the benefit of collective well-being.

Constraints: Factors that inhibit student learning, health, and well-being outcomes.

Creative Arts: A study area that comprises of dance, drama, music, and the visual arts. It aims to guide learners to grow into creative and imaginative individuals who respect the arts.

Creative games and skills: Activities that prepare the learner's whole body by using games as a learning and teaching platform.

Cultural diversity: The existence of a variety of cultural groups within a society.

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): The South African National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is a single, comprehensive, and concise policy document for Grades R to 12 which gives detailed guidance for teachers on what they should teach and how to assess.

Domains of leadership: The domains refer to key areas of leadership development as defined by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008).

Drop All and Read (DAR): 30-minute reading session implemented by the Department of Basic Education with the goal to better the reading skills of Foundation Phase learners.

Enablers: Factors that encourage student learning, health, and well-being outcomes.

Enabling Schools Committee: A collaborative team comprising of school leaders, Foundation Phase teachers, and school-community members (CRCs and fieldworkers) who will plan, organise, and carry out the intervention activities together.

Endline assessment: Test done at the end of the intervention to evaluate the learner's proficiency level and health status; used to identify learner development throughout the intervention.

Figurine: A small 3D model of a human or animal.

Improvise and interpret: The ability for learners to work by themselves or with their peers to create music, movement, and drama.

Intervention: The process of attempting to change an event or experience with the aim of improving the outcome.

Leadership practices: These practices refer to the roles or practices as identified by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008).

Life Skills: A school subject that focuses on the "holistic development of learners. It is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual and physical growth of learners, and with the way in which these are integrated" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 8).

Mini library: A collection of all the books that were created by the learners throughout the reading cycles.

Performing Arts: A topic in the Creative Arts study area that teaches learners creative ways to explore communication, dramatisation, music, and arts.

Personal and Social Well-Being: A study area that teaches learners how to be functioning and well-informed adults in society.

Reading cycle: A three-phase process that focuses on deeply engaging one storybook at a time in to create an enriching and fun storytelling experience

Reading for enjoyment: Feeling that the experience of reading is achievable and therefore enjoying engaging in reading.

Resilience: An ability to recover from or adjust to change and difficult circumstances; thriving despite adversity.

Resource pack: All the storybooks and art-based materials needed to complete the Reading Cycles.

Role-play: Acting out or performing a scene or experience that is new or unfamiliar in a creative way without a predefined story.

Rural schools: Schools located in the quintile 1 to 3 range.

School leadership: The term school leadership recognises the principal as the accounting officer but working collaboratively with all the heads of department (School Management Team).

Self-efficacy: An individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behaviour, and social environment.

Sense of belonging: The psychological feeling of belonging or connectedness to a social, spatial, cultural, professional, or other type of group or a community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Silhouette: An outline of a person, animal, or object.

Social justice: The view or idea that everyone has the right to equal access to resources and opportunities.

Visual Arts: A topic in the Creative Arts study area that focuses on developing motor skills and motor coordination through the use of various materials and art techniques.

Visual literacy: A skill that enables a learner to become aware of their environment through analysis and understanding.

Well-being: The state of being happy, healthy, and empowered.

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