

Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual Summary



Why was the Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual developed?

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.

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 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 members to nurture and enrich 6- to 9-year-old learners’ engagement in reading.

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:

- 1 Strengthen school leadership teams.
- 2 Enable school leaders to harness the skills and commitment of teachers and community members to develop a “reading for enjoyment” culture for learners.
- 3 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.

Who are involved?

School leaders, teachers, and CRCs come together to ensure that learners are supported by a committed team who brings together visionary leadership, expert teaching practices, and community values, identity, and aspirations.

SCHOOL LEADERS

The Enabling Schools Toolkit supports school leaders to set directions and establish expectations in school; build internal and external relationships and develop people; resource the school organisation to embed desired practices; and improve collaboration in learning and teaching. Learning about these research-informed leadership practices and incorporating them in school practice enable leaders to improve the necessary in-school cultures, conditions, and capacity for successful implementation of the Enabling Schools Toolkit.

TEACHERS

The storybooks in the Enabling Schools Toolkit are fully aligned with the Life Skills topics and study areas outlined in the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Grades R-3 in South Africa. Structured reading, writing and arts-based activities are designed to integrate the development of learners' knowledge and skills with the development of their physical, social and personal wellbeing. Using the Enabling Schools Toolkit to foster a "reading for enjoyment" culture is therefore not an add-on to teachers' work. Rather, it will enable teachers to confidently meet CAPS-related requirements. As importantly, teachers' assistance in the classroom will be immensely valuable to the CRCs who strive to support young learners in reading.

COMMUNITY READING CHAMPIONS

The CRCs represent role-models of cultural identities, values 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 should feel a strong connection between "what matters" to them inside the school and outside the 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, CRCs become a key player in cultivating an in-school reading culture that is in touch with the real lifeworld of learners. In doing so, they help learners to see that their school and community are working together to improve their learning and achievement.

FIELDWORKERS

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. They assist the centralised training of principals, teachers and CRCs. As a member of the Enabling School Committee, their role is to support Foundation Phase teachers and CRCs implementing the Reading Cycles and undertaking learner assessments.

What do they do?

- Provide oversight and support
- Secure resources and dedicated school-time for reading
- Actively promote a reading culture
- Lead the implementation of the intervention in school
- Encourage collaboration in school and enhance community engagement
- Develop staff capacity and improve working conditions



- Support CRCs in implementing the six Reading Cycles
- Assist CRCs in organising reading sessions
- Engage learners in reading activities
- Model enjoyment of reading



- Use the Toolkit to encourage a love for reading among learners
- Engage learners in Drop-All-and-Read sessions
- Model enjoyment of reading
- Assist with data collection on learner progress



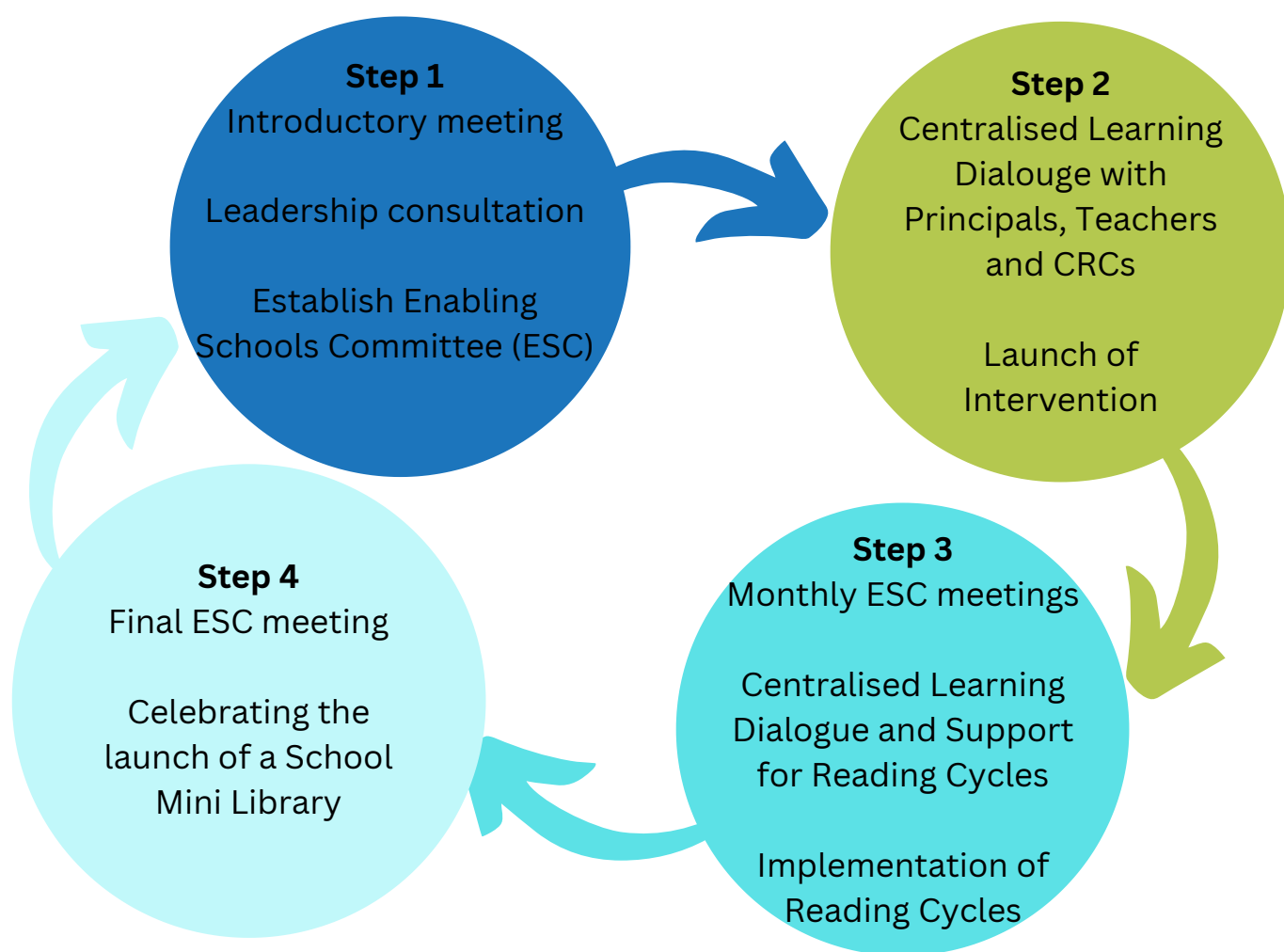
- Coordinate project implementation with RAs, CRCs, teachers, principals and with CRCs across schools
- Monitor and provide support to ensure quality implementation of the intervention
- Assist with training and administering of measures



How does the Enabling Schools Toolkit work?

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.

We have designed an Enabling Schools Toolkit Manual which provides an overview of this whole-child education focussed intervention and detailed descriptions of the roles of school leaders, teachers, CRCs and fieldworkers. We have also designed training manuals for centralised learning dialogue sessions for principals, Foundation Phase teachers, CRCs, and fieldworkers respectively.



The implementation of this whole school-based intervention usually takes seven months, including six Reading Cycles over a five-month period.

Each Reading Cycle spans over three weeks, including ten structured 30-minute Drop All and Read (DAR) sessions. Some classes may need longer to complete all the tasks designed for a reading cycle. It is best that each class takes the time to enjoy reading and creating writing and arts-based outputs. We have therefore included extra time for the six Reading Cycles.

What does the Enabling Schools Toolkit entail?

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.

Part A - An overview of the Enabling Schools Toolkit

Part A focuses on giving the reader an overview of:

- What the Toolkit aims to achieve
- How the Toolkit can benefit rural schools
- How to use the Toolkit to even better
- Frequently asked questions such as:
 - What is the Toolkit?
 - Who will do the work?
 - How will the stakeholders know what to do?
 - What resources are needed?
 - What if the stakeholders need help?
- Introducing the Enabling Schools Committee (ESC)
- What the ESC does

What is an Enabling Schools Committee (ESC)?

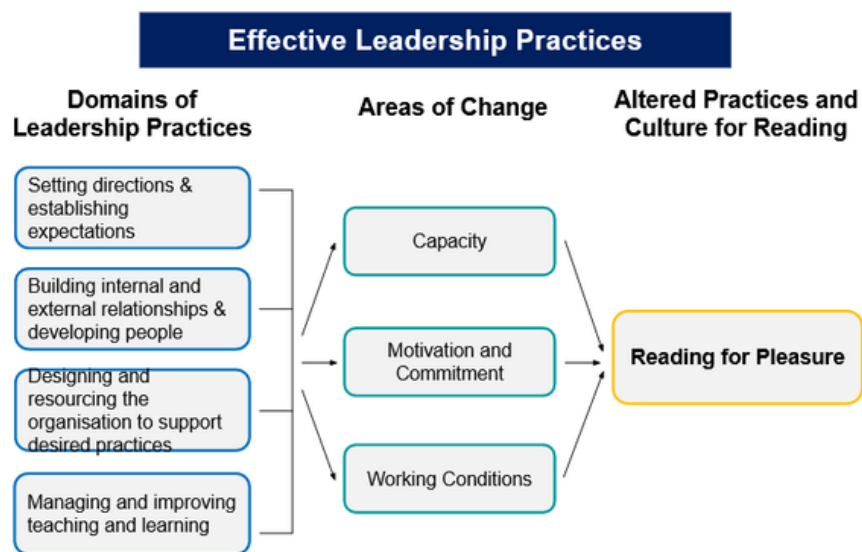
The ESC is a collaborative team comprising of school leaders, Foundation Phase teachers, and CRCs who will plan, organise, and carry out the intervention activities together.



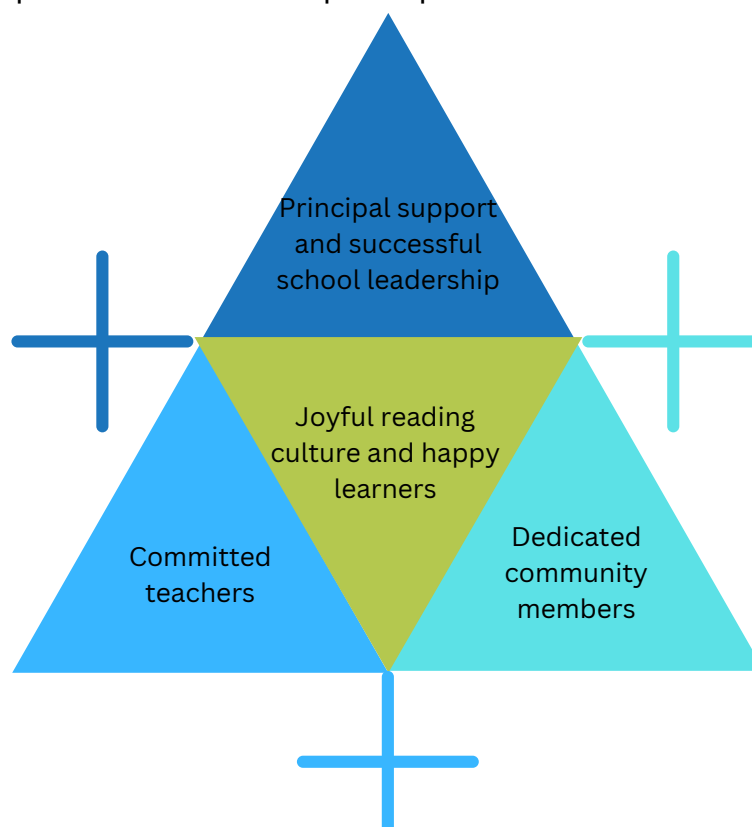
Part B - Focusing on school leadership in the Enabling Schools Toolkit

Part B focuses on school leadership and their role in the intervention:

- Why school leadership matters
- The role of school leadership in the whole-school intervention
- The importance and benefits of reading for enjoyment
- An introduction to the four domains of effective school leadership
- Planned steps for school leaders including:
 - Principals' actions to create a culture of *reading for enjoyment*
 - Practical examples on how school leaders may support the implementation of the Enabling Schools Toolkit



The establishment of a positive reading culture within the school environment and the success of this intervention rely on dedicated school leadership, committed teachers and enthusiastic community members. Among these, the key to success is the positive modelling and support of the school principal.



Part C - Focusing on teachers and Community Reading Champions (CRCs) implementing Reading Cycles in the Enabling Schools Toolkit

Part C focuses on teachers and community members and their role in the intervention:

- The importance and benefits of reading for enjoyment
- The three-phase Enabling Schools Toolkit "Reading Cycle" including:
 - An introduction to the Enabling Schools Toolkit "Reading Cycle"
 - What does the Enabling Schools Toolkit "Reading Cycle" look like?

