

>>> Best Practices at Schools evaluated during 2014

This study is to share the exceptional practices found during a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) at 7 schools visited in 2014 and to inspire other schools to strive towards excellence. The schools acknowledged are: Eikestad Laerskool, Muhammedyah Primary, Ravensmead Secondary, Rhenish Primary, Rondebosch Boys' Preparatory, Sun Valley Primary and Vredendal Laerskool.

The report is based on selected criteria which were rated as good to outstanding within the nine areas of evaluation specified in the WSE Policy: Basic functionality; Leadership, management and communication; Governance and relationships; Quality of teaching and learning and educator development; Curriculum provision and resources; Learner achievement; School safety, security and discipline; School infrastructure; and Parents and community.

>>> Work-orientated ethos

All staff members perform at their optimum and become immersed in the school ethos and culture of excellence.

High performing schools review their systems and practices on an ongoing basis, especially in terms of staying abreast with new developments.

>>> Innovative measures are continuously implemented, even beyond the boundaries of WSE criteria, to ensure that schools are not only fully-functional but exceed expectations.

>>> The values and principles that are expressed in the mission and vision statements are displayed and infused in the schools' programmes. The value systems are geared to develop inner discipline without relying on coercive measures. Effective protocols and procedures are in place to deal with undesirable behaviour. A nurturing and stimulating environment is created for the learners. All activities are done in an orderly manner. Learners love being at school and respect each other, the staff, amenities and environment.



Rondebosch Boys' Preparatory

>>> Exceptional and vibrant leadership

The leadership drives the mission and vision statements. This is evident from the implementation of the School Improvement Plans (SIPs). Leadership structures are highly-motivated, goal-orientated and able to give sound direction as managers of their schools. The principals and School Management Teams realise that consistent work is required to sustain excellent standards.

There is an emphasis on shared or collective leadership. Various leadership portfolios are held by teachers across the different post levels. Delegation is directed towards building capacity and mentoring others to lead. Leadership skills are nurtured and developed, not only in teachers but also in learners.

>>> The schools have effective systems in place to monitor curriculum delivery. Clear monitoring and moderation procedures are in place for all the phases. These systems include the monitoring of weekly planning, learners' books, curriculum files and regular class visits. To ensure that high standards are maintained, teachers plan together and the standard of formal assessment tasks is moderated thoroughly.

➤➤➤ Continuous and effective staff development

The SIPs are clear, implemented and include staff development programmes. Besides the mentoring of future leaders, the schools retain teachers who are immersed in a culture of high performance.

➤➤➤ New recruits are selected carefully and supported to maintain the standards at the schools.

➤➤➤ Staff development initiatives are planned and carried out; teachers seek opportunities for professional development, take pride in their work and are loyal to their colleagues and leadership by not wanting to let the team down. This collegiality contributes to optimal learner performance.

➤➤➤ Innovative classroom practices

Learners are supported to engage with the relevant curriculum content at and beyond the required level. Direct instruction and scaffolding techniques are used to support learners to attain the outcomes and learners are challenged to improve their performance on a continuous basis.

Teachers include appropriate learning activities in their lessons which expose learners to relevant content knowledge, and create opportunities to learn and consolidate new practical and cognitive skills. In addition to practical skills such as dictionary usage and computer literacy, teachers challenge learners to engage in cognitive skills such as interpretation and analysis.



Vredendal Laer

➤➤➤ Teachers employ a variety of teaching methods and techniques to stimulate and sustain learners' interest. A wide range of resources are used regularly and effectively to enhance lessons which includes everyday objects, Mathematics apparatus, dictionaries and interactive whiteboards.

➤➤➤ In most classes, a good pace of curriculum delivery is maintained through teachers' use of varied teaching and learning activities. Lessons are structured and concluded in the allocated time. Learners are required to do homework on a daily basis which provides an opportunity for further practice and consolidation.

➤➤➤ Appropriate and individualised interventions

Teachers use the feedback given in WCED reports on the annual systemic tests' results as well as reflect on the ANAs to conduct diagnostic analysis.

Outcomes of these analyses are used to review teaching strategies in order to improve learner achievement. Extensive intervention programmes are geared to the specific needs of the learners: there has been an improvement in the internal and external assessment results. Class teachers implement effective differentiated strategies during lessons. Groups of learners are provided with support in specified areas which have been identified from the diagnostic analysis.

➤➤➤ Learners receive extra tuition after schools hours. Meetings and interviews with parents are scheduled to inform them of their child's progress and the intervention strategies that are being employed.



Sun Valley Primary

Eikestad Laerskool has a functional Institutional Level Support team (ILST) to support learners with barriers and provide achievers with structured enrichment programmes.

➤➤➤ One of the strategies at Muhammadayah Primary School was to move two of the Foundation Phase teachers to Grade 4 for continuity in the teaching methodology.

➤➤➤ Ravensmead Secondary School uses the analysis of the NSC examinations to inform structured interventions. Extra classes are held after school and on Saturdays to support learners who struggle with their academic work. The University of Stellenbosch medical students assist Grade 9 learners with Mathematics and Languages on Saturdays. The school's alumni provide breakfast for the learners who attend extra classes on Saturdays.



Ravensmead Secondary

➤➤➤ At Rhenish Primary and Rondebosch Boys' Preparatory Schools, the Mathematics classes are streamed according to abilities to ensure that instruction is aligned with the learning styles and level of performance.

Vredendal Laerskool conducts tests to establish the learners' areas of difficulty in Mathematics and Languages. A remedial programme is compiled to address the specific needs of the learners.



Rhenish Primary

➤➤➤ Quarterly reviews are conducted at Sun Valley Primary School. High risk learners are identified and their progress is monitored. Several instruments, such as the Brain Processes and Sensory Integration Profile are used to diagnose learners' specific barriers and appropriate interventions are recommended. Interventions cover a wide spectrum, including eye-testing, occupational, visual-motor and speech therapy.

➤➤➤ Interventions are monitored and regular feedback is considered, reviewed and effectively implemented. The impact of all the initiatives is not left to chance – it is measured and the attainment of targets is tracked.

➤➤➤ Enhanced learner achievement

Learners receive regular formal and informal corrective feedback, as well as developmental comments from teachers.

➤➤➤ The majority of the learners achieve at or above the required level in most subjects in the internal and external assessments.

➤➤➤ Excellent performance is not taken for granted. Learners realise that they have to work consistently and give of their best. Teachers are always seeking ways to raise the bar even higher.



Muhammedeyah Primary

➤➤➤ Careful planning and management of LTSM

Effective procedures are followed for the distribution and retrieval of textbooks and other LTSM in all the schools. Most textbooks, which are covered and treated with care, are retrieved at the end of the year according to clear guidelines. The attrition rate of textbooks is minimal.

➤➤➤ Constant maintenance

The schools have effective procedures in place to ensure that the buildings and grounds are maintained and in good condition. There is quick turnaround time for preventative and planned maintenance. The school premises, including the ablution facilities, are always clean and tidy.

Conclusion

A common thread is that all stakeholders - principals, teachers, learners, support staff and parents - are committed and passionate about their schools. Often instructional times are exceeded and work done beyond the call of duty. All schools appreciate and understand the benefit of active participation in the development and implementation of the SIP.