

How Macassar Primary School improved classroom management

Macassar Primary is a government school situated in the Western Cape, with a staff complement of 31 and a student population of 1,056, amounting to almost 38 pupils per class. Macassar Township was established in 1971 as a result of the Group Areas Act under the Apartheid Government and the school was established in 1972, to serve a community with a population of almost 100,000 people.



Economic development in Macassar was not a priority for the local government and this led to the high poverty setting that exists today. Joblessness, single-parent households, child-headed households, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, and many other demoralizing factors, are all challenges that exist within this community. The current world and national economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic exponentially increased the existing negative impact of these factors on education provisioning in Macassar.

In 2016, the Principal attended the Instructional Leadership Development Programme and successfully completed 18 months of training. Using his newfound knowledge, the principal implemented schoolwide and in-class routines to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which resulted in a positive impact on the school's performance. By the end of the ILL training, Mathematics results at the school increased from 11% to 73% (Source: Mark Williams, former Macassar Primary Principal).

CHALLENGES

Leadership Changes

In 2018, the principal left the school, and the new principal, having not had similar training did not prioritise instructional leadership practices despite the structures that had been established. Submission dates, curriculum planning, moderation of lesson plans, assessments, and book scrutiny were only carried out by the curricular head of the school, and teachers quickly reverted to old habits.

Classroom Management

Macassar faced similar challenges to most under-resourced schools in South Africa with high levels of absenteeism by teachers and learners, and education not being a priority for learners who are constantly exposed to gangsterism, substance abuse and dysfunctional family lives. The school constantly dealt with discipline issues, poor curriculum planning, and teachers who struggled to manage their classrooms effectively. Shouting and talking over the learners was the norm and there was significant loss in teaching time. This negatively impacted on the quality of teaching and learning that was taking place.

IMPACT

A Deputy Principal attended Cohort 2 of ILI training in 2018 and, after successfully completing the 18-months of training, began to reintroduce and implement Instructional Leadership strategies and techniques with young teachers. These teachers highlighted the positives of the techniques and succeeded in convincing their colleagues to adopt instructional leadership practices. Professional development sessions became compulsory for all staff, and everyone is provided with structured and informal support to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms.

The Deputy Principal noted that young teachers were responsible for significantly improving the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms. Curriculum planning and lesson planning improved, which helped teachers be more focused on what content to teach in their classrooms and they have become proficient in using techniques that are aimed at getting

and retaining the learners' attention. By only focusing on implementing lesson planning and developing class routines, the school has improved overall classroom management.

The most valuable learnings were:

Student Culture:

Strong routines during morning arrival sets the learners up for a great start to the day. Every morning all teachers and learners assemble in the school quad, and after announcements and words of encouragement, everyone transitions effectively to their classrooms, and teaching commences within 5 minutes of the transition. Generally, the average transition times in government schools is between 8 to 12 minutes which often results in the loss of significant teaching and learning time for learners.

Classroom Management:

Strong voice, "What-to-do" instructions, efficient transitions, and classroom entry routines are slowly and steadily improving classroom management and having a positive impact on learner contact time.

Planning

Term planners and curriculum planning are now being finalised and approved during the previous term for implementation in the next term leading to improved efficiencies for teachers.

Observation and Feedback

Early adopters (teachers) were exposed to class observation, learnt how to be receptive to immediate feedback and were coached to achieve mastery in their implementation. This helped teachers identify gaps in their skills and knowledge and provided teachers with a platform for continued self-improvement through implementing reiterated processes and techniques within their classrooms. Ongoing feedback has ensured that these improvements are consistently applied by the teachers.

Data

Collecting the right data has become a regular way to help identify strengths and weaknesses of the techniques and routines established in the school and the classrooms, and has helped with the development of subject improvement plans that focus on addressing specific challenges that were identified through data analysis.

CONCLUSION

While Macassar Primary deals with the same challenges and social issues as many schools in under-resourced areas, by proactively implementing the management techniques learnt through the ILI programme, the school was able to address the key factors affecting the delivery of quality teaching and learning in the classrooms. This has resulted in established routines that are part of the student and school culture and improved classroom management in the foundation phase with growing integration of these practices into the intermediate phases. Macassar Primary is successfully implementing a whole-school culture change.