

13 February 2024

Advisory Note

07



Raymond Tywakadi, (DDG Curriculum, ECDOE)

Implementation of the ECDOE Reading Strategy

1. Introduction

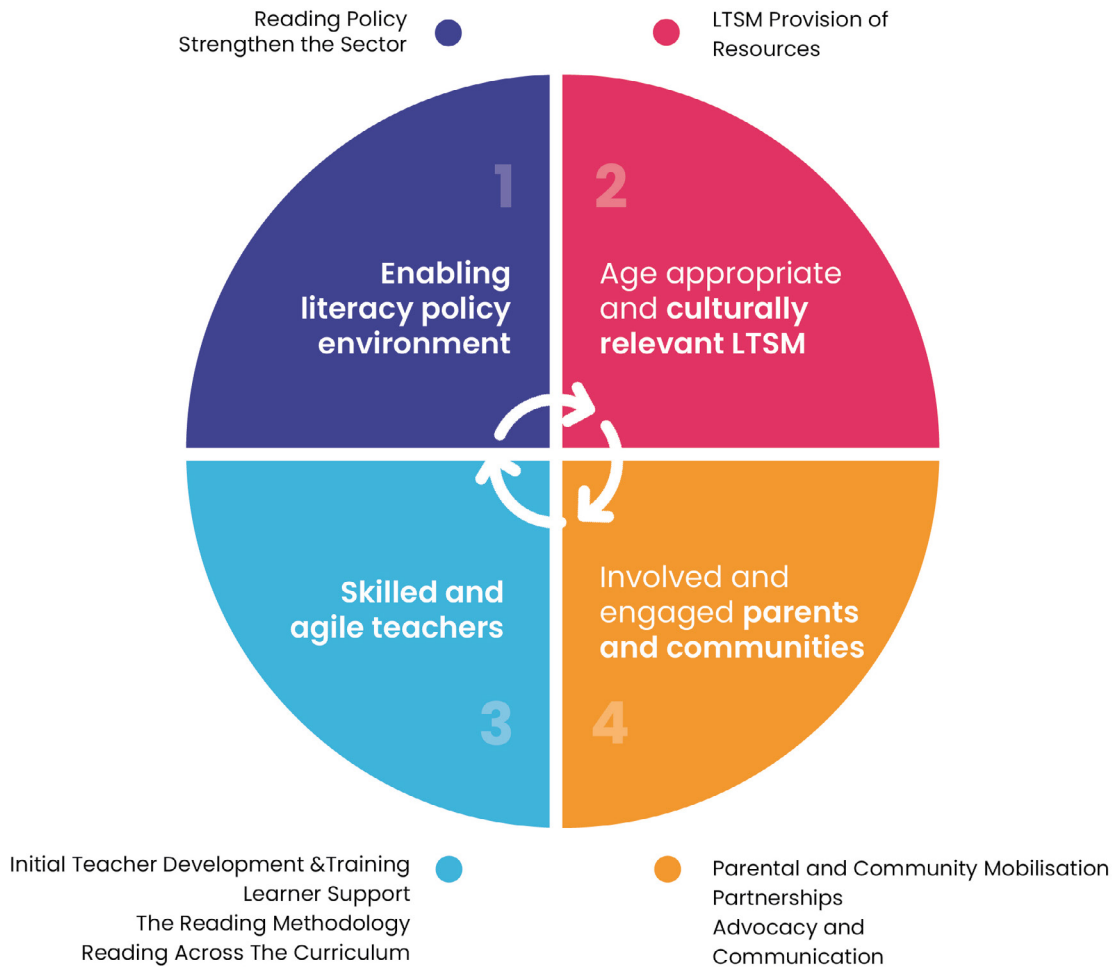
To address the poor performance in reading, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) developed a Reading Strategy and Campaign: #Improve Reading to Improve Learning (2022-2030). This note verbale describes progress on the implementation of the Eastern Cape Reading Strategy, and ends with lessons learned and recommendations for next steps in 2024 through

2. Background

In early August 2023, the DBE launched a revised National Reading Strategy. The revised DBE National Reading Strategy was presented at four venues in the Eastern Cape in the week 7 to 11 August. In September, the ECDOE Reading Strategy was adjusted to align with the National Reading Strategy. The four pillars of the Reading Strategy are set out in the figure below.

- Enabling Literacy Policy Environment
- Age appropriate LTSM
- Skilled and agile teachers
- Involved and engaged parents and communities.

Figure 1: DBE National Reading Strategy Pillars



The Department sourced for technical support to enhance the implementation of the ECDOE Reading Strategy. The Technical Assistance work focussed on development of an implementation plan to co-ordinate the implementation of the Eastern Cape Reading Strategy.

3. Pillars the ECDOE Reading Strategy

3.1. Enabling Policy

In July 2023, the Department issued a Curriculum Instruction requiring all primary schools in the Eastern Cape to develop individual School Reading Policies. The Curriculum Instruction was accompanied by a template and videos to support the development of School Reading Policies. Schools were expected to submit their policies to their respective Circuit Managers by 31 October 2023. The ECDOE will monitor and support the implementation of reading policies throughout 2024.

3.2. Age appropriate LTSM for the Reading Strategy

An amount of R24 million was ring-fenced in the 2023/24 ECDOE budget for the procurement of LTSM to support the ECDOE Reading Strategy. Part of this budget was used to procure and print over one million readers for delivery to schools from November 2023 to February 2024.

- 485 000 Xhosa Vula Bula anthologies of graded readers
- 10 500 Sesotho Vula Bula anthologies of graded readers
- 150 000 English DBE graded readers
- 150 000 Afrikaans DBE graded readers
- 19 200 Sesotho Zenex readers
- 195 000 Xhosa Zenex readers

3.3. Foundation Phase Teacher development to support the Reading Strategy

Key Directorates of Primary Education, Inclusive Education and Language in Education Policy (LiEP) collaborated in developing a programme for the teaching of reading in the Foundation Phase and the courses cover nine topics:

- Teaching Reading in African Languages: Xhosa – FP
- Phonics: Xhosa, English and Afrikaans – FP
- Balanced Language Approach Afrikaans – IP
- Assessment: Oral Reading Fluency – IP and SP English and Xhosa
- Reading Norms and Standards - IP and SP
- Training by FW Afrikaans Group 1 and 2 - IP
- Literature - IP and SP
- Creative Writing - IP and SP
- Handwriting DBE Manual TOT FP Languages

Two rounds of teacher training have taken place to date including more than 1400 teachers, focused on teaching reading, phonics, handwriting and phonemic awareness.

4. Communication of the ECDOE Reading Strategy

The following communication activities were completed:

- A curriculum instruction to all schools on the reading strategy
- Presentations to the education advisory council (Incl. faith based organisations, Labour, school governing bodies, higher education institutes, NGOs and chambers of commerce) led by the MEC
- Eleven videos to communicate different aspects of the ECDOE Reading Strategy were placed on the ECDOE website and social media platforms.
- A flier for distribution to schools and parents was developed and 4 000 copies printed.
- Ten short jingles for distribution to local radio station were produced and placed on the ECDOE website and social media platforms.

5. Integrated district improvement plans

5.1 NECT Readers

The NECT printed 212 000 Xhosa Graded Readers and delivered these to all District Offices in the province districts in boxes of 1 000 readers each. The GET Curriculum Directorate at Head Office has advised NECT and other providers on how the readers should be distributed and used in schools.

6. Lessons and recommendations

6.1. Lessons

The interviews conducted with officials from all Branches of the ECDOE were invaluable in planning implementation of the Reading Strategy in 2023 and 2024. The interviews revealed that there was little understanding of the Reading Strategy by officials from other sections of the ECDOE. The interviews also provided an opportunity to get ideas from a range of officials and share information on the Reading Strategy.

- By June 2023, there was a broad plan in place for the implementation of the Reading Strategy, but little concrete planning had taken place to ensure that the focus areas of the Reading Strategy were implemented in 2023 and 2024. This meant that processes and procedures were rushed; and budget availability was uncertain.
- The focus of implementation of the Reading Strategy in 2023 was on LTSM procurement and delivery, the development of School Reading Policies and teacher training. Little attention was paid to communication with parents and communities, reading across the curriculum and learner support. These three aspects of the Reading Strategy should receive attention in 2024.
- The monitoring of the teacher training in October provided Head Office officials with insights for future planning. Little other monitoring of the implementation of the Reading Strategy took place in 2023.
- The planning for the January Teacher Training was excellent and provided a benchmark for future planning.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Much more attention will be given in the years 2024 to 2030 to informing ECDOE officials and schools timeously of plans for the implementation of the Reading Strategy and progress on implementation.
2. Consultation with District officials before implementation is especially important to ensure a common understanding of the plans for the implementation of the Reading Strategy and the various roles and responsibilities of officials.
3. Planning for all Reading Strategy activities in the 2024/25 Financial Year to be completed by 31 January 2024. This planning should include:
4. Maintain a Steering Committee to guide the implementation of the Reading Strategy. The GET officials who were part of the Steering Committee in 2023 have developed extensive experience and expertise.
5. Long-term planning for the Reading Strategy should be discussed and finalized in the second term of 2024 / first quarter of the 2024/24 Financial Year. This plan should include all aspects of the four pillars of the ECDOE Reading Strategy. Particular attention should be given to priorities for teacher training of Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers. Service providers will have to be found for Intermediate Phase teacher training.