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Campaign for School Libraries Advisory Committee: Prof. Genevieve Hart (UWC); Prof. Paula Ensor (UCT); Peter Henshall; Prof. Mary Nassimbeni (UCT); Nkosinathi Mahala (Khayelitsha Librarian); Khosi Mabandla (WCED); Rose Damon (WCED)
Campaign for School Library Supporters: Dr Mamphele Ramphele, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Lebo Mashile, Sindiwe Magona, Gcina Mhlophe, Nadine Gordimer, Dean Rowan Smith

8 September 2009

Mr Brian Schreuder
Head of Education (Acting)
Western Cape Education Department
c/o Ms Tindie Viljoen
Fax: 021 - 461 3694

RESPONSE TO WCED ANNOUNCEMENT ON LIBRARIES

Dear Mr Schreuder,

Equal Education and the Campaign for School Libraries

1. Equal Education [EE] is a movement of learners, parents, teachers and community members working for quality and equality in South African education, through analysis and activism.
2. Presently, we are engaged in a Campaign for School Libraries. The campaign is explained during the course of this letter. We would welcome to opportunity to meet with you and brief you more fully.
3. Over 17,000 people have signed the petition attached as an appendix to this letter. These will be handed over to a representative of the national Department of Education on September 22, after the Walk for School Libraries.



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4. Many seminars, marches, pickets and countless meetings, involving hundreds of people, have gone into building this campaign, and will continue to sustain it.
5. It will continue until such time as there is agreement on a national policy on school libraries, on the basis of the progressive realisation, within a reasonable time frame, for the provision of a library for every school.

The recent announcement on school libraries by the WCED

6. EE welcomes the WCED's commitment to advise schools in the province to spend 10% of their Learning and Teaching Support Materials [LTSM] funding on library materials. EE urges the WCED to make this 10% mandatory.
7. EE will urge other provincial education departments to follow the WCED in taking this progressive step.
8. We are particularly pleased because the notion that each school must spend 10% of LTSM in this way is one of the five key demands in EE's Campaign for School Libraries.
9. Your positive response so early in this campaign indicates a public administration, in line with Section 195 of the Constitution, which is "accountable" and is being conducted on the basis that "people's needs must be responded to".
10. When ordinary people, learners, parents, teachers and community members, the membership of Equal Education, see government responding in this way it is a great boost for democracy in this country. As S195 enjoins, "the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making".
11. This is a victory for community and youth activism. It shows what progressive organising, research and policy work can achieve. But it is only the beginning.

Additional steps if the vision of universal and equal access to libraries is to be realised

12. There are four additional demands in the Campaign for School Libraries:
 - a. **A library for every school**
 - b. **Human resources:** A trained librarian or library administrator, working full time



- c. **Books and Equipment:** Expand QIDS-UP library project nationally to provide shelving, computers and 3 books per learner
 - d. Teachers, parents, learners and SGB members to be **work-shopped** on the value of school libraries
13. These must also be accepted if we are to see real progress. We demand that this happens.

The current status of access of school libraries in the Western Cape

14. The *National Education Infrastructure Management System* report (NEIMS), published by the Department of Education for the first time in 2007 states that 7% of schools in South Africa have functional libraries. The NEIMS put the Western Cape at 25%.
15. The figure quoted recently by the WCED is that 62% of schools in the province have libraries. This is vastly different from the NEIMS figure. We wish to stress that our demand is for functional libraries.
16. In Khayelitsha, for example, less than 5 of the 54 schools have functional libraries.
17. Very few of our members in Mitchells Plain and Kraaifontein have libraries in their schools.
18. Our members will avail themselves as volunteers to assist with the huge effort needed to provide a library for every school.

Policy Reform

19. To begin to improve this critical situation a serious policy reform is needed.
20. WCED's plan to appoint specialist librarians in the province's districts sounds promising, however this will do little to improve the burden on teacher-librarians in schools that do not have extra funds to appoint dedicated librarians.
21. As reported in Chapter 5 of the LIS [Libraries] Transformation Charter, adopted by National Departments of Arts & Culture and Education in 2008, of 50 surveyed



educators enrolled for the University of the Western Caps's school LIS programme in 2008, all but 3 are in fact full-time classroom educators. None reports any funding for LIS materials from school funds; none of their schools has a LIS open after school hours.¹

22. EE understands that addressing the absence of school libraries may require a national budgetary allocation. We therefore invite provincial education departments to join with us in calling for, and working towards, a National Policy on School Libraries.

23. According to the LIS Transformation Charter, "The Department of Education has produced for discussion five draft national school LIS policy documents since 1996, the latest in 2005."

24. There is still no national policy in existence.

Libraries are indispensable and we will continue to campaign for them

25. In our campaign material we outline five key reasons why libraries are indispensable to learning including the development of reading literacy and information literacy, and the need to provide a safe place to study and gain access to information. Perhaps the most obvious is spelt out by the LIS Transformation Charter itself:

"The South African curriculum - in its ethos and its pedagogies – cannot be delivered without access to well-managed collections of learning resources."

26. It is our commitment as civil society to make sure that the rights of children to education, equality and human dignity are realised. We are advocating for a good quality education for all, particularly the poor and working class majority in this country.

27. In our country, education has been a privilege of the few whilst the working class majority are too often left to fend for themselves. This is an injustice and a violation of our rights to education, equality and human dignity. In order to transform this unequal society, we have to start with leveling the playing fields by providing basic facilities and training and supporting the learners and teachers of this country.

¹ The LIS Transformation Charter was commissioned by the National Library of South Africa [NLSA] and the National Council for Library & Information Services [NCLIS]. Available at <http://www.nlsa.ac.za/NLSA/docs/LIS%20Transformation%20Charter%20Draft%205.pdf>.



Walk for School Libraries on 22 September 2009

28. We warmly invite you to participate on the 22nd of September, when more than 1500 learners, parents, teachers and community members will walk from Salt River High School to City Hall, Cape Town to raise the demands of this campaign, and above all to call for a National Policy on School Libraries.

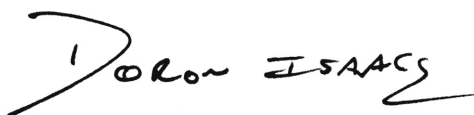
29. Please note that in the interests of public access to information, transparency and accountability to our members we reserve the right to make this letter public.

Yours in quality and equal education,

Sincerely,



Yoliswa Dwane
Head of Department
Policy, Communications & Research



Doron Isaacs
Coordinator

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