



**CHANGE
HOW THE
STORY ENDS**

INFORMATION HANDBOOK

Prioritising **early grade literacy**
and driving **legislative reform**.



WHO IS THE RIGHT TO READ CAMPAIGN?

The Right to Read Campaign is a broad-based alliance of civil society and education organisations advocating for the right to read. The Right to Read Campaign aims to make early-grade literacy a national priority through legislative reform and the development of binding regulations for the first four grades.

The campaign is calling for literacy to be regulated and prioritised nationally. We are drafting and will submit Regulations for Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Foundation Phase Literacy to the Minister of Basic Education.

OUR FOCUS AREAS



Community Mobilisation

We capacitate communities, parents, teachers, youth, and civil society to understand the literacy crisis, and help them demand the right to read.



Education & Legal

We use evidence based research, education experts, teachers and stakeholders to understand the literacy crisis and develop solutions. We use the law to push for change and to protect people's rights.

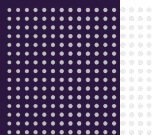


Advocacy and Storytelling

"We use traditional and social media platforms as well as engagements with elected and departmental officials to advocate for the prioritisation of foundation phase literacy and the development of regulations."



Our goal is to have **binding regulations developed alongside the DBE** and adopted.



WHY?

81% OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN IN GRADE 4 CANNOT READ FOR MEANING IN ANY LANGUAGE.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of children reach Grade 4 unable to read for meaning in any language. We believe that binding regulations are a critical part of the solution. This campaign aims to support the work of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) while holding them accountable to ensure they achieve their goal: that every child in South Africa can read for meaning by Grade 4.

WHAT IS READING FOR MEANING?

Reading for meaning is being able to read words fluently and understand them, so a child can explain what a sentence, paragraph, or story is saying in their own words.

Why it matters?

In Grades R–3, children learn to read. From Grade 4 onwards, they must read to learn. If a child hasn't learned to read with understanding by the end of Grade 3, they struggle to grasp new ideas across all subjects and fall further behind each year. Research shows that once a child falls behind, they stay behind.

The cost of not reading for meaning:

- Poor academic performance
- Gaps in basic concepts that never close
- Greater risk of dropping out before matric

The opportunity

Early-grade literacy is South Africa's most solvable education challenge. If we prioritise it, so every child becomes an independent reader in their home language by the end of Grade 3, we unlock their potential, improve results across the system, and build a stronger future for all.



WHY REGULATIONS?

REGULATIONS ARE BINDING LAWS THAT CLARIFY OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Literacy regulations will spell out what administrators and teachers must do to give learners the best possible chance of learning to read for meaning by the age of 10.

Regulations have to be complied with, and if they aren't, there are legal consequences. The broader SA community will have an important role to play in monitoring if and how the regulations are implemented in schools. The regulations will include obligations that are measurable by parents and communities, such as how many reading books are in a classroom, whether a teacher has completed the compulsory literacy training, and how your child is doing on standardised literacy tests. Binding regulations will require budgeting, and the public will be able to check whether schools and the state are prioritising expenditure on literacy as they should.



WHAT IS IN THE DRAFT REGULATIONS?

MINIMUM NORMS AND STANDARDS ACROSS 4 KEY AREAS



1. TEXT

- ✓ The minimum package of text to be available in every classroom and to every learner in the foundation phase of every public school
- ✓ The minimum package of text must be rich in mother tongue resources, and relatable to learners' lived experiences.
- ✓ Minimum text package must be funded, produced, procured, ordered, and delivered on time
- ✓ Access to a functioning, stocked, school library, community library, or mobile library on a weekly basis, and/or a classroom library that has a minimum of 3 different titles per learner that are age, language, and level appropriate.



2. TIME

- ✓ Stipulates the minimum amount of time to be spent on literacy activities.
- ✓ Details the range of literacy activities learners can engage with during the school day
- ✓ Details the range of literacy activities that must be implemented by teachers and monitored by principals to track learner progress in literacy.



3. TEACHER TRAINING

- ✓ Clarifying and, where necessary, setting the minimum teacher competencies and qualifications for foundation phase teachers (and intermediate phase language teachers) to teach and assess literacy
- ✓ Specialised, dedicated training for the teaching of literacy shall be provided to, and must be successfully completed, by both in-service teachers and pre-service teachers to teach/facilitate reading for meaning
- ✓ Teachers to receive on-site support to support literacy.



4. TEST

- ✓ Adopting benchmarks for literacy skills to be achieved by learners in each official language
- ✓ Developing and implementing standardized national literacy assessments to assess every learner enrolled in grades R to 3 in their Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT).
- ✓ Tests must be at regular intervals, and at least annually, and the results made available to a learner's parent or guardian.
- ✓ Testing should not be time-consuming or administratively onerous. Test results should help parents and teachers understand what needs to be done to assist learners.



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR READING

In South Africa lots of research has already been done on reading for meaning and helpful benchmarks have been developed. We know how many correct letter sounds per minute a child should know in their home language (or Language of learning and teaching) at the end of grade 1, and how many words they should be able to read in a minute at the end of each foundation phase grade. Making sure learners reach these milestones is an important way to measure progress and ensure that all children can read for meaning by the age of 10.

Where have regulations worked?

- **Minimum norms and standards for school funding:** clarify state's obligations to fund schools at a particular level (NNSSF, implemented 2000)
- **Minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure:** clarify what infrastructure schools must be provided with (2014)



HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN?

Parents and community members can:

- Attend local Right to Read activations.
- Share campaign materials with others.
- Write a letter to the Right to Read Campaign if you identify shortages (see example below)
- Collaborate with organisations through the Right to Read alliance.

Resources (scan QR code to visit website)



Nalibali library of audio, written, and video stories and activities which cater for ages 0 to learners in their teenage years. Include links to all organisations.



The South African Storybook Initiative provides contextually appropriate storybooks and materials in home languages for children aged 2 to 10.



Bookdash provides an online library of African storybooks for children up to the age of 5.



The Department of Basic Education, South Africa collates resources related to the ones listed here.

LETTER TEMPLATE

DATE

RIGHT TO READ CAMPAIGN

(Name)

Per email: info@righttoread.org.za

EQUAL EDUCATION

Per email:

LEGAL RESOURCE CENTRE

Per email:

Dear Right to Read Campaign

RE: Shortage **(of text, tests, teacher training or time)** at _____
(name of school, district, and province).

We write to you on behalf of parents/SGB/Community in _____
(name of school, district, and province) committed to making early-grade literacy a priority.

We were activated by the Right to Read Campaign on _____ **(date)**, and
as a result of that activation have noted a _____ **(text, tests,**
teacher training or time) shortage in our community.

We are approaching Right to Read to assist us in investigating this shortage in the
foundation phase.

As a community steadfast in making early grade literacy a priority through legislative reform,
your assistance in this investigation would be greatly appreciated.

We look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

X

On behalf of the parents/SGB/Community of _____



Scan QR code to
copy and paste
letter template

FOUNDING ORGANISATIONS



South African Human Rights Commission

The South African Human Rights Commission is the national institution established to support constitutional democracy in terms of chapter 9 of our Constitution. It is committed to promote respect for, observance of, and protection of human rights for everyone without fear or favour.



Legal Resources Centre

The Legal Resources Centre is an independent, non-profit public interest law center with offices throughout South Africa. The LRC empowers individuals and communities through the law, promoting social justice, championing equality, and realizing the human rights enshrined in the South African Constitution.



Centre For Child Law

The Centre for Child Law ("CCL") is a child rights strategic litigation organisation that was established in 1998. CCL is registered as a law clinic with the Legal Practice Council in terms of the Legal Practice Act 28 of 2014. CCL is housed in the University of Pretoria's Law Faculty, where they concurrently conduct research and teaching activities.



Equal Education

Equal Education (EE) is a youth-led mass democratic movement of learners, post-school youth, parents, teachers, and community members who use mobilisation and public action, supported by careful research, to empower young activists and ensure equality in South African education.



Equal Education Legal Centre

Founded in 2012, the EELC is registered as a law clinic with the Legal Practice Council and its staff of social justice lawyers specialise in education policy, legal advocacy, community lawyering, and public interest litigation.



Section 27

SECTION27 is a human rights organization that seeks to achieve substantive equality and social justice in South Africa. SECTION27 uses law, advocacy, legal literacy, research, and community mobilisation to advance socio-economic rights, in particular the right to access health care services and the right to basic education as guaranteed in section 27 and section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, respectively.

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RECOGNISING THE RIGHT TO READ, DEFINING IT, AND CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION ARE IMPORTANT FIRST STEPS FROM WHICH FOCUSED, STRATEGIC ADVOCACY AND LITIGATION MAY FOLLOW. THIS WILL REQUIRE EFFORT FROM ALL OF US.

Former Constitutional Court Justice,
Edwin Cameron





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Contact us

✉ info@righttoread.org.za

📷 [@RighttoRead.za](https://www.instagram.com/RighttoRead.za)

✂ [@RighttoRead_](https://twitter.com/RighttoRead_)