



Leadership in Education Podcast

Holistic development in a successful township school

Sister Francis Sheehy, Principal of St Matthews Private Secondary School in Rockville, Soweto, discusses her school's challenges, achievements, Catholic ethos and parental and community engagement with Barbara Dale-Jones (05-10-2015)



Sister Francis Sheehy and Barbara Dale-Jones of BRIDGE at Cliff Central studio

School Context:

- Catholic ethos
- Fee paying with 60 % subsidy
- Gr 8 intake: half St Matthews Primary, half other schools
- 100% matric pass & very high throughput rates

Challenges:

- situated in an unsafe area
- many learners with family and socio-economic difficulties
- disadvantaged educational backgrounds, learning gaps

"... if you expect great things, you will get great things – and we do have great expectations of our young people..." Sister Francis Sheehy

Leadership through Collaboration

Leading by example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principal teaches, experiencing the same challenges and gaining legitimacy with teachers
A shared focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • solidarity amongst teachers (including SMT) & with learners and their families
Role modelling behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsibility, compassion, openness, trust
Strong academic preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extra classes in all subjects; special emphasis on filling gaps in maths, including computer-based instruction; buddy system for learners
Emphasis on values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educating for humanity, i.e. learners capable of reasoned judgment, free of bias; caring for others and the world about them
A well rounded experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extramural activities: music (instruments and choral), dance, art, debate, sports (soccer, netball, athletics), community outreach
Engaging parents and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective communication on school ethos; approach to education; learner performance; matric demands and expectations • pledging support/ commitment on intake and around matric • close parish-based community links

Some ideas to think about ...

- What are my views on principals taking on an active teaching role?
- Which values are important for my school community, and what more can we do to instil these values?
- How successfully does my school engage with parents/ families? Are there any other approaches we might use?



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