

CONNECTED EDUCATION
EVERY LEADER, EVERY
TEACHER, EVERY LEARNER

BRIDGE
LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

Hooked on Books

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF
READING IN THE CLASSROOM

A BRIDGE Knowledge Product



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LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

The following document details 1 of 7 innovative ideas as shared by Mariyeni, a participant of the Axis Education Forum 2016. Here, you will find: a brief discussion on the importance of cultivating a culture of reading among learners and resources to help you develop enthusiasm for reading in your classroom.

Mariyeni discussed the profound crisis regarding **the ‘culture of reading’ in South Africa**. Only a small portion of the public reads and buys books, there is a virtual collapse of library services, and publishing in African languages continues to be a struggle. Given this context, Mariyeni highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of reading among learners.

Why do learners need to read?

- Reading is important because it is a powerful learning tool, a means of constructing meaning and acquiring new knowledge. Reading constitutes the very process through which learning occurs.
- Mathematical literacy and English language comprehension remain substantial hurdles in South African education. Failure rates in both Math and English are high as a majority of learners have trouble interpreting questions and phrasing their responses in both subjects. Encouraging a culture of reading is central to improving learner competency in this regard.

Case Study: Literacy Club at Masibambane

Mariyeni described an effort at her school, Masibambane College, to improve literacy through the introduction of a Literacy Club. The Club works as follows:

- Mariyeni meets with learners to discuss the stories the learners have read in class.
- Learners are also given access to ebooks to further their reading outside the classroom.
- The Literacy Club includes a writing component, in terms of which learners are required to reflect on what they have read in a journal and via the club's whatsapp group.
- Mariyeni defined learning as a social practice, a communal set of activities. The communal aspect of learning forms the basis of the club. Rather than confining learning to a set of formal rules, Mariyeni creates a safe and relaxed learning environment where she is not a teacher, but an equally engaged participant.
- She also allows learners to discuss the reading materials in whatever language they feel most comfortable using, and in so doing fosters confidence in her learners and promotes the spirit of ubuntu.

How does one cultivate a culture of reading in the classroom?

- **Invite learners to socialise around reading.** Set up book/literacy clubs, reading groups, literature circles.
- **Organize a Read-a-Thon.** Set a reading challenge for learners to read a certain number of pages or books in a set period of time in return for pledges of money from family and friends.
- **Take a field trip.** This is another way to make reading social and exciting. Visit your local library, a university library or a bookstore.
- **Listen to audio books.** Invite learners to listen to audio books or play short passages to them. Though audiobooks don't develop learners' decoding or fluency skills, they do develop their vocabulary, encourage their comprehension skills and foster an interest in stories.
- **Teach reading strategies.** This helps build and strengthen learners' literacy skills in print awareness, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

For more ideas on how to encourage a culture of reading in your classroom, click [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).