

Recommendations for education practitioners and leaders

Priority areas: How can education practitioners and leaders support reading and formative assessment?

SPC-EQAP has identified two priority areas that apply across all recommendations for education practitioners and leaders: (i) support is needed for student reading performance; and (ii) formative assessment practices. These areas can have substantial effects on student performance.

Education practitioners and leaders can improve student reading performance through implementing the recommendations in the section below: crucially, delivering targeted interventions for student performance (1); reviewing performance of schools and other educational organisations in areas highlighted by PILNA findings (2), supporting professional development of teachers (3), and strengthening the structures that enable good quality teaching (4).

These groups might also consider:

- Further embedding reading in the classroom and curriculum – this could include:
 - having a dedicated library lesson once or twice a month;
 - building a dedicated time for reading every day into the school timetable;
 - asking students to keep a ‘reading diary’ of what they have read; you could add additional elements, such as asking parents to sign-off that reading has happened or indicate whether the student was reading or being read to;
 - having a class novel to read, as well as ensuring students are reading independently; teachers and students should read aloud from the novel, including ‘guided reading’ sessions when students explore and answer questions about the story together;
 - having class discussions about books, book reviews, or presentations about texts; and creating activities to help students engage with stories in different ways, e.g. drawing (creating storyboards or posters) or acting, which can involve scripting for TV or radio, creating film trailers, radio adverts.
- Strengthening or creating ways to encourage reading – this could include:
 - appointing a ‘literacy lead’ to find opportunities for promoting literacy across all subjects;
 - teachers, from all subjects, sharing what they have read or are currently reading;
 - creating a dedicated book corner or area in the classroom to read or exchange books if your school does not have a library;

- creating classroom celebrations of reading, e.g. having students design a bookmark for each book they have read and displaying these on the classroom wall;
- starting a 'book club' for students;
- hosting school reading competitions each term; or asking family or community members to come in to read and be read to, during dedicated reading time; and
- inviting authors and storytellers into the school and creating an event around the visit.

Education practitioners and leaders can support formative assessment practices by implementing them in their classrooms and schools, developing the formative assessment competence of teachers and educators, and advocating for their use in the wider education system. Formative assessment activities are used to see where students are in their learning and for teachers to adapt their teaching accordingly. This adaptation can include moving on if the student is ready, or simple re-capping if the student needs some reinforcement or re-teaching of the learning outcome.

Some key considerations for implementing formative assessment practices include (OECD, 2008):

- establishment of a classroom culture that encourages interaction and the use of assessment tools;
- establishment of learning goals and tracking of individual student progress toward those goals;
- the use of varied instruction methods to meet diverse student needs;
- the use of varied approaches to assessing student understanding;
- feedback on student performance and adaptation of instruction to meet identified needs; and
- active involvement of students in the learning process.

Some key activities used in formative assessment include questioning, feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment. Formative assessment can also be partnered with retrieval practice (also known as the 'testing effect'), which develops student confidence.

1. Design and deliver targeted learning interventions to fill learning gaps if present.

Regional PILNA findings suggest that this cohort of students may need targeted support. Use national PILNA findings to identify any learning gaps and design targeted learning interventions for students. If left unaddressed, learning gaps may adversely affect students' future schooling.

Different levels of intervention might be needed, from school-level to system-level. These might include targeted remedial programmes to help children catch up on missed learning, especially those who have been out of school for longer periods or to help disadvantaged children. Interventions should consider equity, access and inclusion. They should also consider ways to embed benefits over the long term. An example might be establishing structures for mentors or coaches to work with educators to identify and address student learning gaps.

The numeracy, reading and writing sections outline specific areas that students had difficulty with across the region and give recommendations for how teachers might overcome them. The recommendations could inform the design of interventions in these areas.

2. Review performance of schools and other educational organisations in areas highlighted by PILNA findings.

PILNA regional findings suggest that, overall, students have not been meeting minimum performance standards over time. There may be national needs to improve education system performance in literacy and numeracy. Education stakeholders should consider reviewing organisational performance and whether changes might be necessary to improve student outcomes.

Schools and education institutions could consider utilising a School Self Evaluation Form to review and develop policies, using the findings in line with national and regional standards.

3. Develop teachers and educators based on the PILNA findings and where needed.

If needs are identified, education practitioners and leaders should provide professional development opportunities to teachers and educators. PILNA regional findings suggest development may be needed in the following areas:

- numeracy and literacy teaching, particularly literacy teaching and, within this, teaching unstructured literacy areas, such as quality of ideas in writing;
- formative assessment practices; and
- strategies to support student well-being and students with learning difficulties.

These needs may not be locally relevant and stakeholders are encouraged to assess their own development needs in context.

4. Strengthen or develop structures to support the ongoing development of teachers and educators.

There may be a need to strengthen or develop the systems and structures for ongoing professional development of teachers and educators. These structures include those that monitor and identify needs, provide ongoing guidance, or further enable development.

Education practitioners and leaders may consider appointing school leaders in areas such as curriculum, pedagogy, literacy, numeracy, or assessment to be accountable for these areas and maintain standards. These groups might also consider developing peer-learning and support networks or developing formative assessment strategies.

Stakeholders should collaboratively work to identify the most appropriate systems and structures for professional development in their contexts.

5. Assess systemic and organisational readiness for school closures.

Stakeholders should assess their readiness for potential future school closures. Schools and education institutions should assess their internal readiness and work with other stakeholders to determine systemic readiness for closures.

From the findings, these groups may consider addressing their readiness for closures, developing strategies, and making changes where wanted. These assessments should include learning continuity mechanisms, as well as student and staff support.

6. Identify and report needs of teachers, schools, and the wider education system to government and other relevant stakeholders.

Education practitioners and leaders should collaborate to share their needs and challenges with stakeholders. In particular, these groups should report their need for resources and infrastructure, capacity and labour, student learning supports, and readiness for school closures. It is important that, if challenges exist within the education system, these are effectively communicated and addressed.

If you have any questions or comments about these recommendations, please [contact SPC-EQAP](#).

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