



THROUGH THE LEARNER'S EYES
BRIDGING THE GRADE 7–8 LITERACY GAP



Presented by:

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My passion is simple:

- ✓ To **See The Learner** before **We See The Mark.**
- ✓ To understand where a learner are coming from, **what are they experiencing and what they need.** And are they positioned to become confident learners, readers, thinkers and young people prepared for their future.”

An interesting fact about me is that *I recently completed writing my first book, which is currently in the editing phase. Writing has become another avenue through which I explore and share messages of resilience, growth and purpose.*

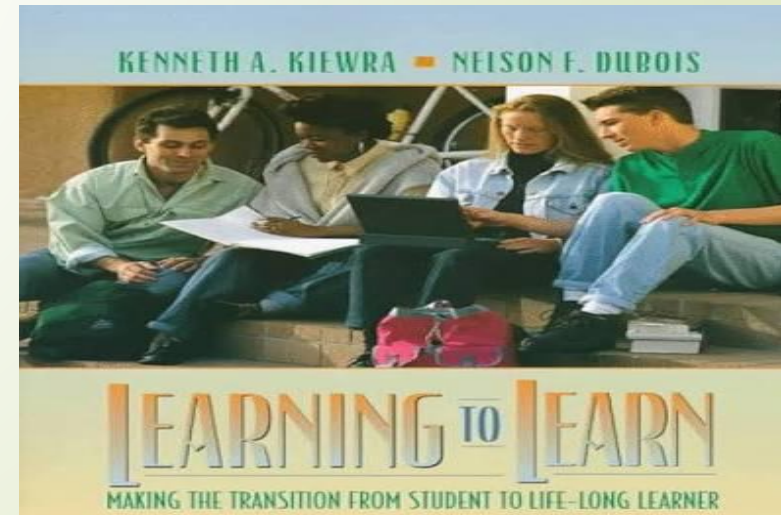
INTRODUCTION

To look at literacy difficulties through the learner's eyes. Look beyond academic performance and Before we ask, 'Why is this learner not performing?', let us ask:

- **What is this learner experiencing,**
- **What literacy demands are they struggling to meet,**
- **And what support could help them move forward**



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DISCUSSION



- ❖ **Understanding the learner behind the academic performance** – what learners may experience emotionally, socially and academically when entering secondary school.
- ❖ **Identifying literacy gaps early** – recognising learners who may have progressed to secondary school without fully developing the reading, comprehension, vocabulary or writing skills required at this level.
- ❖ **The changing literacy demands of secondary school** – helping learners move from basic reading and writing towards comprehension, interpretation, critical thinking and subject-specific academic language.
- ❖ **Early identification and support** – understanding when a learner's difficulties may require additional academic, psycho-educational or developmental support.

Understanding the Learner Behind the Academic Performance

A learner enters Grade 8. **They were coping reasonably well in primary school.** By the end of Term 1, **their marks have dropped, homework is often incomplete, they rarely participate, and they avoid reading aloud.**

What might we conclude about this learner?

“What else could be happening?”

The learner's perspective.

What could the learner be experiencing?



Understanding the Learner Behind the Academic Performance

❖ A learner may be adjusting academically while also trying to find their place socially and manage new emotions and expectations.

❖ Crucial to establish:

What is happening with this learner?"
rather than concluding "This learner is not performing."



During this transaction learners trying to juggle different things such as :

❖ Career Adjustment

❖ Literacy demand

❖ Learning gaps becomes visible

❖ Independency

❖ Belonging

❖ Multiple Teachers

❖ Confidence

❖ Fear for Failure

❖ Emotional Adjustment

LOOK BEYOND THE MARKS

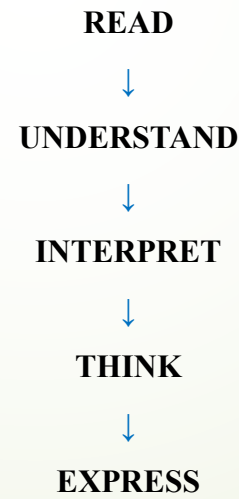


Before we ask why the learner is not performing, perhaps we should first ask: **What has changed for this learner, what are they experiencing, and what support do they need to succeed?**

Sometimes what appears to be an academic-performance problem is actually a literacy-access problem.”

Being able to read the words does not necessarily mean being able to understand, interpret or use what has been read.

Literacy Ladder



GRADE 8 READING PARAGRAPH

The New School

When Sipho arrived at his new secondary school, he was surprised by how different everything felt. Instead of spending most of the day with one teacher, he moved from classroom to classroom and met a different teacher for almost every subject. During the first few weeks, Sipho often forgot his homework and sometimes arrived at class without the correct textbook.

His teachers began to think that he was careless and unprepared. What they did not know was that Sipho was struggling to understand his new timetable and was afraid to ask for help because most of his classmates seemed to know exactly what they were doing.

After one teacher took time to explain the school routine and helped him develop a simple weekly planner, Sipho gradually became more organised and confident.

THE CHANGING LITERACY DEMANDS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

Primary literacy

Read → Understand → Answer

versus increasingly: Secondary literacy

Read → Understand → Interpret → Analyse → Evaluate → Justify → Communicate

Did the learner suddenly become less capable in Grade 8—or did the literacy demand change.

High School Examination Command words

- **Identify**
- **Describe**
- **Explain**
- **Compare**
- **Analyse**
- **Evaluate**
- **Justify**

Early Identification and Support

Teachers are not expected to diagnose. Teachers are exceptionally well positioned to notice.

NOTICE → EXPLORE → SUPPORT → MONITOR → COLLABORATE → REFER



Referral does not automatically mean Scholastic Assessment.

➤ **Classroom/Academic Support**

Targeted literacy intervention, additional reading practice, writing support, differentiated instruction, tutoring or academic catch-up.

➤ **School-Based Support**

Collaboration between teachers, learner-support staff and parents to understand the difficulty and develop an intervention plan.

➤ **Psycho-educational Support**

Where appropriate, further assessment can help provide information about the learner's learning profile, strengths, areas requiring support and factors that may be affecting educational functioning.

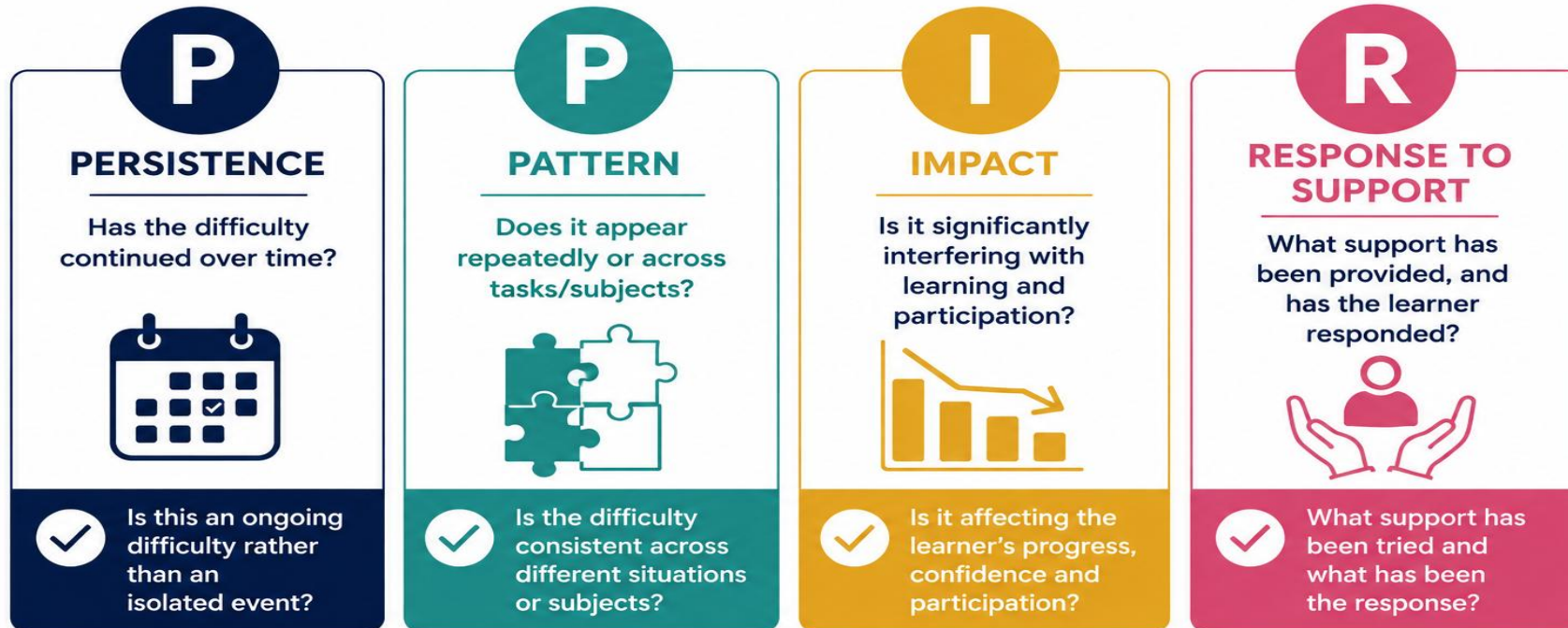
➤ **Other Professional Support**

Depending on the nature of the concern, the school's referral pathway may involve an appropriately qualified educational psychologist, speech-language therapist, occupational therapist or another relevant professional.

Early Identification and Support ...cont: PPIR check

PPIR CHECK

A simple guide to noticing and supporting learner difficulties



Notice early. Understand deeply. Support intentionally. Empower every learner.



One poor test result does not necessarily indicate a learning difficulty. We are looking for patterns, persistence, impact and response to intervention."

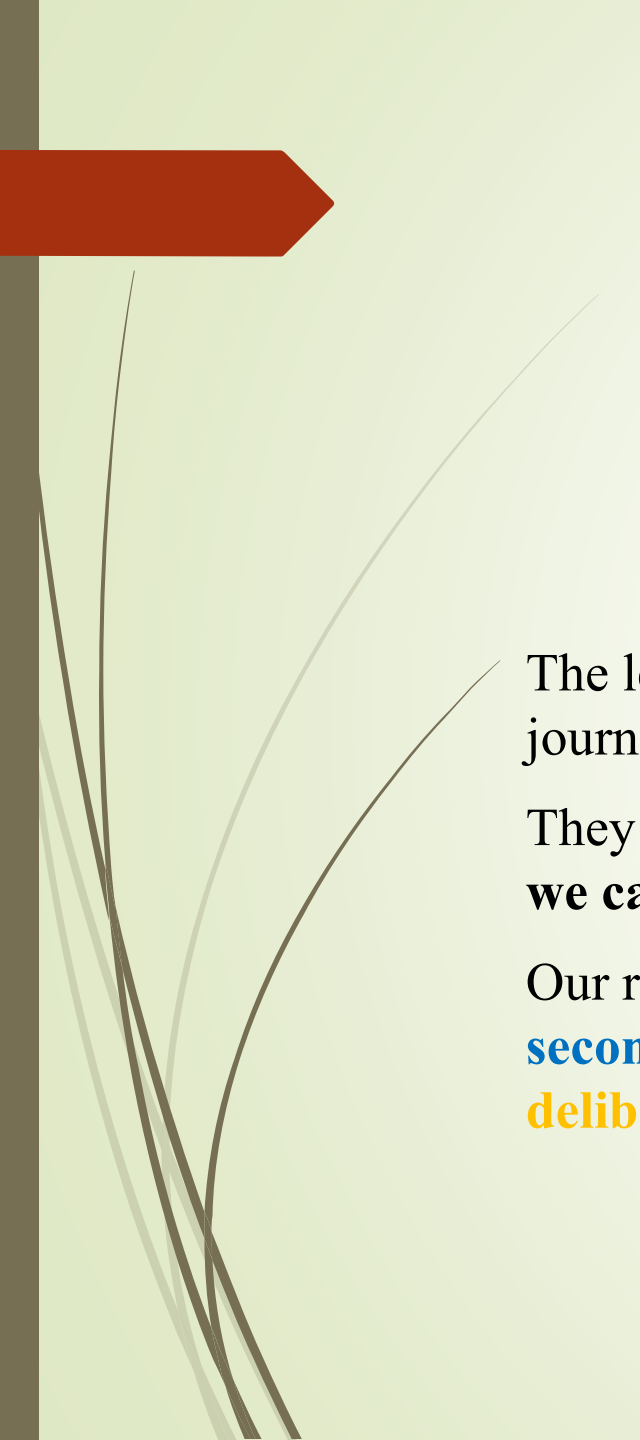
What will we do differently?”

LOOK – LISTEN – SUPPORT – ACT

- **LOOK**: What am I noticing beyond the learner's marks?
- **LISTEN**: What might the learner be communicating through their behaviour or performance?
- **SUPPORT**: What can I change or provide in my classroom?
- **ACT**: When is additional intervention required?

DOING THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

TOGETHER
WE CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE



THANK YOU!

The learner who **enters our secondary-school classroom** is not starting a new learning journey; they are continuing one.

They arrive **with strengths, experiences, confidence, gaps and sometimes barriers that we cannot immediately see.**

Our responsibility **is not simply to ask whether they are ready for the demands of secondary school**, but **to understand where they are**, identify what they need, and **deliberately build the bridge that enables them to move forward."**