

## Ignition Group takes the power of reading to where it's needed most

"South Africa is facing a reading crisis, with eight out of every 10 children unable to read properly," says Samantha Botha, head of group marketing for Ignition Group (Ignition). "The foundations for encouraging a literate society in the country, have slowly deteriorated due to a number of factors - the absence of a reading culture amongst adult South Africans, the demise of school libraries due to the high cost of books and the sub-standard training for teachers of reading."

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"Research shows that children are not able to read in English or their home language, creating a stumbling block before they even get off the starting line," Botha says. "We decided to do something about it and are thrilled to partner with **The Learner Project** once again for this initiative. This time we will be working with Windy Heights Primary School in Malukazi, Umlazi, where we have set up and will officially be handing over to the learners and staff, 19 Classroom Book Corners, with 60 books in each book corner, totalling 1140 books in all. We're especially thrilled to have Ayanda Mthembu as our guest of honour - an optician, dynamic businesswoman and a proud former Windy Heights pupil."



"Today history was made at Windy Heights with the official opening of the Book Corners and Classroom transformation project," said Roslynne Toerien, CEO and founder of The Learn Project. Each Book Corner is equipped with a comfortable carpet to sit on, cushions, an alphabet chart, literacy chart and book corner rules chart, as well as a book shelf. All the books are covered in plastic, accessioned and catalogued according to grade, colour coded with stickers, to assist with the organised placement of the reading matter on the shelves and entered into a register for accountability purposes.



Addressing the young learners and special guests, headmistress of Windy Heights, Thembekile Makhanya expressed her appreciation to The Learn Project and Ignition Group for 'taking up the mission to bring books and the love of reading to our school'. "Research has shown the challenges facing readers at Grade 4 and Foundation Phase and that is why we are gathered today. Thanks to these two partners what you see, is as a result of a promise kept by Roslynne – 19 book corner libraries for foundation phase classes."





"We take our reading so seriously that we have even changed our timetable and activities to include it in our school timetable," she continues. "Changes include: a half hour morning reading session from 7-7.25am; we've added an extra hour to the end of the school day; a Library period and promote storytelling and reading aloud in all our classes; in addition, we award books to high achievers; have started teaching local history and produce a school newspaper twice a year for learners to read for their parents; we also mark important days which promote literacy such as Literacy Day."

"At The Learn Project we aim to inspire hope, instill change and impact lives through the power of books and literacy," Toerien continues. "We believe that a reading nation is a leading nation, and that readers make leaders and leaders build nations. It is up to us to equip future generations."

"Literacy is a fundamental human right and a pre-requisite for even the most basic employment. Being able to read can help the children of South Africa live satisfying and rewarding lives and partake fully in society as they grow and mature," says Botha.

The employment opportunities offered at Ignition Group provided the impetus for the company to take on this project. It all began on Mandela Day 2022 with a book collection at the Ignition offices. The results were overwhelming and a total of 13 Book Corners were placed in Eskhululiwe Primary School in eNanda. In December, the group donated a full library to Eskhululiwe, to assist the older learners at the school. In partnership with The Learn Project, they also organised a local sewing group in the community, The Bhambayi Sewing Group, led by the talented Thembi Biyela who sews from her wheelchair, to make book bags and curtains.

In addition to this, Ignition has supplied tables, chairs, educational posters and other essential classroom/library necessities to the school. Teachers were sponsored to attend a Learn teacher training course on the use of the library so that they are empowered and encouraged to make the most of this valuable resource in their school, and a teacher librarian has been trained using the Learn Project Librarianship course. She will assist in preparing the books and the library, and will also spend time in the other Learn beneficiary school libraries to train and gain experience.

"We have chosen to partner with schools in areas where the children of many of our staff are learners. By doing this we are giving back to our people in the best way possible – by improving the lives of their children and the future of our country."

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