

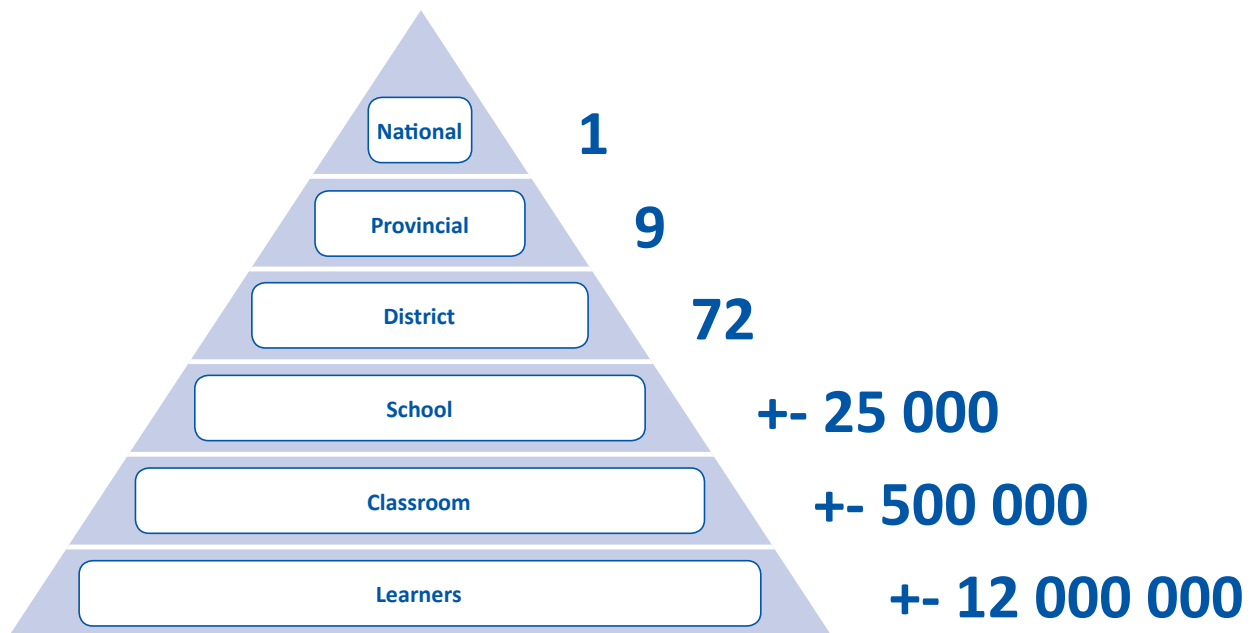
# An innovative solution to South Africa’s education crisis

## 1. South Africa’s education system is challenged

Despite South Africa’s status as a middle-income country, its education system is challenged. The World Economic Forum ranks South Africa 146th out of 148 countries for educational quality, and last (148th out of 148 countries) in Mathematics and Science education. More than 50% of children drop out of school before Grade 12 and it is estimated (by officials of the Department of Education) that more than 60% of Grade 8s can’t read at grade level.

Despite increased government spending in education, the education system faces persistent challenges in terms of quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching at all levels. In addition to government spending, more than 43% of the overall CSI spend (estimated to be R7.8-billion) goes to education<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. The education system in numbers



More than 20 000 schools in South Africa are categorized as “failing schools”. The cost of illiteracy is estimated to be R550-billion per year<sup>2</sup>. Less than 30% of the one million children who start Grade 1 every year will be able to sustain themselves financially. The system is failing South Africa’s children.

1. Triologue CSI Handbook 2013

2. Servaas van der Berg, 2007. “Apartheid’s Enduring Legacy: Inequalities in Education-super-1,” Journal of African Economies, Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), vol. 16(5), pages 849-880, November.

### 3. Two education systems in one country (largely due to Apartheid)

<p><b>Schools that work</b></p> <p><b>20%</b></p> <p>5 000 schools</p> <p><b>World-class</b></p>	<p><b>'Failing' schools</b></p> <p><b>80%</b></p> <p>20 000 schools</p> <p><b>Failing our children</b></p>
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### 4. Differentiating factors between successful and failing schools

<p><b>Schools that work</b></p> <p><b>20%</b></p> <p>5 000 schools</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Principals who are equipped for their task.</li> <li>2. An active community of citizens supporting the principal – with finance, HR, facilities, etc. and parents actively engaged (in partnership with teachers). Active and supportive School Governing Body.</li> </ol>	<p><b>'Failing' schools</b></p> <p><b>80%</b></p> <p>20 000 schools</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers who have been promoted to the role of principal (without the knowledge and skills to lead an organisation).</li> <li>2. Very little support from other citizens and parents.</li> </ol>
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A growing body of literature recognises school leadership as the critical factor in turning around an education system in crisis. International research shows that the key differences between schools that succeed and schools that fail are the vision, commitment, and leadership skills of the principal and the extent to which parents and other community members are involved in the school.

### 5. Partners for Possibility

Since 2010 Symphonia for South Africa has been supporting and developing school principals by partnering business leaders (with skills and knowledge of leading change) with school principals in co-action and co-learning **Partnerships for Possibility** across the country.

**Partners for Possibility** is a leadership development and principal support process that:

- equips principals with the skills and knowledge to lead change and mobilise the communities around their schools.
- provides practical hands-on support to principals as they embark on a change journey at their schools.
- shares what works and engages leaders to replicate proven interventions that leverage all resources.

**Partners for Possibility** is an innovative answer to all of the challenges mentioned above:

## 1. Asset-based community development and frugal innovation

Instead of developing an expensive consultant-led solution to the problem, we are tapping into one of South Africa’s national assets: well-trained business leaders who have a lot of knowledge and experience about leading change (and who want to make a contribution to public education). When these business leaders are partnered with struggling school principals in a facilitated and structured development process, principals get the kind of support that they need in order to lead change at their schools.

The core assumption and PfP experience is that the answers for most of the issues faced at our schools are available in the community (rather than somewhere external to the community) but the principals and community members do need assistance in order to re-discover their capacity to lead and collaborate. Each partnership between business leaders and school principals is catalytic and transformational for students, teachers, communities and the leaders themselves.

## 2. One school at a time

Education experts agree: the critical unit of change in an education system is the school.

By engaging committed business leaders with principals desiring to lead their schools and communities (supported by experienced PfP teams) significant visible progress occurs that creates a virtuous cycle that will attract more leaders and resources to this challenging task (20 000 failing schools in South Africa).

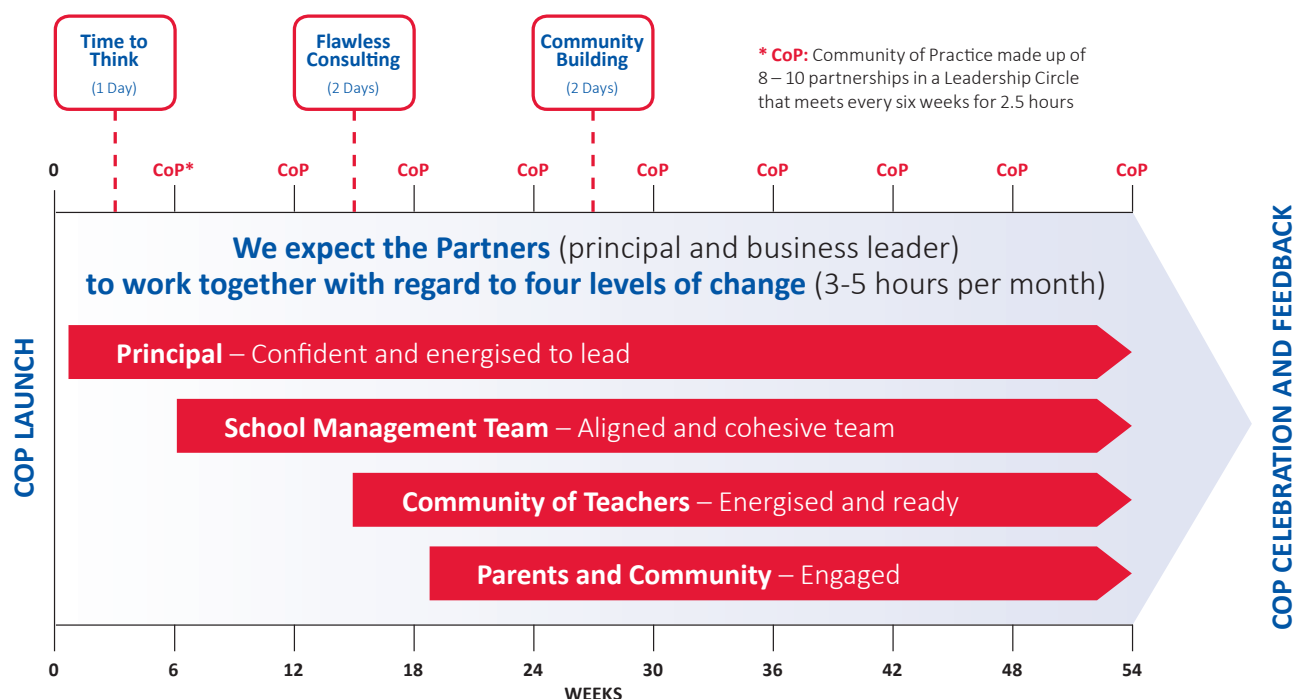
## 3. An award-winning leadership development and principal support process

The process is both a leadership development process as well as a principal support process.

The PfP approach is to focus on the principal and on their leadership challenges and development with two key outcomes expected during the first year:

1. The principal attains the confidence and skills to lead.
2. The principal’s improved leadership ability results in more energy at the school through the following key enablers:
  - > A School Management Team working as an aligned and cohesive team
  - > Motivated teachers re-energised to teach with joy and enthusiasm
  - > Engaged parents and community members

### The structured Partners for Possibility curriculum and process



## 6. Results to date – hope and possibility in action

In just a few short years of operation (since 2010), the Partners for Possibility programme has had a huge impact in 600 schools. So far, Symphonia for South Africa has impacted:

- 607 partnerships
- 607 business leaders
- 15 175+ teachers
- 330 000+ parents
- 485 000+ learners

We now see:

- **Principals** who are confident to lead and manage change at their schools
  - > Re-energised and confident
  - > Equipped and supported for their task
  - > Leading communities to get actively involved at their schools
- Increased **energy and vibrancy** at schools
  - > Happier and more engaged educators who feel supported and appreciated
  - > Engaged parents working in partnership with teachers and supporting school activities
  - > Schools that become magnets for gifts and contributions from community
  - > Learners who benefit from all of the above (crucial for improved learner outcomes)
- **Business leaders** who are better leaders
  - > Better knowledge and understanding of challenges in under-resourced communities
  - > Key learning outcomes from leadership development process: learning how to deal with complexity and ambiguity, leading beyond authority, influencing across boundaries, leading with humanity

## 7. An invitation to get involved

We would like to support many more principals across South Africa in order to expand the impact of our programme.

The experience for business leaders who have been part of the Partners for Possibility process is proven and endorsed by past participants as a 'smart' investment into the South African education system.

South African business leaders are invited to join this transformational programme and make a significant contribution to South Africa's education system by helping to strengthen leadership and management capacity at one school.

The cost of participation is R85 000 for a partnership. This is typically covered by CSI / Skills Development (for the principal's portion of R45 000) and Leadership / Skills Development (R40 000 for the business leader's portion). PfP is an accredited leadership development process with more than 80% black beneficiaries which means that investment in PfP contributes to Skills Development / SED points on the BBBEE scorecard.



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