Schools Improvement Initiative

Fostering partnerships ▪ Harnessing resources ▪ Improving schools

SII Schools
Improvement
Initiative
IN SCHOOL IN COMMUNITY
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Why we need a Schools Improvement Initiative

The crisis in South African public schools has a direct impact on universities. Many learners who attend township and rural schools perform poorly in the matric examinations. This hampers their efforts to qualify for university. The quality of school education for the majority of South Africans needs to improve dramatically if we are to break this cycle of under achievement and failure. This is a monumental task and one that requires all stakeholders to get involved. This is why the Schools Improvement Initiative (SII) at the University of Cape Town came into being.

What we do

Though the SII, UCT engages practically, developmentally and critically with the problems of schooling in this country. With a strong focus on interdisciplinary collaboration and school improvement, we draw on university-wide resources and initiatives – including academic staff and student service organisations.

We are also committed to forging links and working in partnership with education-related groups outside of the university, in particular the province's Metropole East Education District.

Where we focus our efforts

The SII focuses its interventions on schools in the township of Khayelitsha in the Cape Town Metropole. Whereas the core of our school improvement work focuses on three primary and two secondary partner schools, through the 100-UP university preparation programme, the SII works in all 20 secondary schools in the township.

Nolundi Mbaba, Grade 6 English teacher with her learners

UCT 4th year Speech-Language Therapy professional practice students

"The school is one of the few schools in the area that has a functional library. The overall impact of the library on the school has been remarkable. Since the opening of the library the school has seen a shift in focus not only by the learners but with educators. Learning now not only takes place in the classes, but beyond. Educators are now able to consult the library when planning assignments and projects, thus promoting collaborative teaching. The library is really the heart and soul of school. It is where learning takes place, a place that inspires learners to achieve their best."
Unathi Zengezi, Usasazo Library Assistant

Working with the Western Cape Education Department
With our objectives in mind, we work closely with the district to ensure that the support that is offered to our partner schools addresses their needs and is of maximum benefit to them.

Teacher professional and school oganisational development
Successful school organisational development and teacher professional development lies at the heart of our work. The Schools Development Unit (SDU) in the School of Education runs a range of university-approved and SACE-registered short courses to meet the professional development needs of teachers and school managers. With an emphasis on classroom-based support, the SDU is actively engaged in all five partner schools.

Service learning
In line with UCT's social responsiveness agenda, the SII partner schools provide sites for service learning. Each year sees students from different academic departments spending time in the schools engaging in professional practice. These include occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, audiology, social work and education student teachers from the faculties of Health Sciences and Humanities. The SII also works in close collaboration with the Knowledge Co-op, to place post-graduate students from Information Systems in the partner schools.

Interdisciplinary collaboration
The SII provides opportunities for UCT staff to participate in engaged scholarship. It also encourages student volunteerism in the partner schools. Organisations involved in after-school activties include Ubunye and SHAWCO.

School libraries
The SII works with The Bookery, Nal'ibali and Rotary to establish libraries, four of which have been set up to date in the partner schools. With our partners, including UCT's Library & Information Studies Centre, we are committed to providing ongoing support to library assistants as they seek to create vibrant learning spaces at the schools.

100-UP
This three-year university preparation programme (Grade 10-12) has been running since 2011. Every year sees a new group of 100 Grade 10s recruited onto the programme, five from each of the 20 secondary schools in Khayelitsha. The focus is on developing both academic and life skills. In addition to a Grade 11 and 12 Saturday School, learners participate in a range of workshops and activities and are exposed to campus life through residential camps. Matriculants are encouraged to pursue degrees in all fields of study at UCT or at one of our neighbouring universities. Since 2014, over 500 learners have been helped to secure university placements, with nearly 250 enrolling at UCT.

Community of practice for principals
With its commitment to providing responsive support, the SII has established a professional community of practice (COP) for principals in the partner schools. The five principals meet on a regular basis to share best practice. The COP is faciliated by a management specialist provided by the SII.

Tembeka Mzozoyana, social worker with COSAT learners

COSAT Wellness Centre

Established in 2015, the Wellness Centre facilitates a range of services and interventions to promote personal and developmental wellness. Psychosocial support is offered to COSAT learners by a fulltime social worker as well as by 3rd and 4th-year social work students from UCT's Department of Social Development. Support is provided in the form of individual and group counselling as well as family reconstruction therapy.

'The COSAT Wellness Centre is a valuable and indispensible part of the school because of the significant role it plays in supporting the holistic wellbeing of our learners and parents. Our learners face many challenges which impact negatively on their academic performance. Having a trained social worker at the school has made a huge difference to the COSAT community.'
Phadiela Cooper, COSAT principal

CONTACT US

If you are interested in linking to the SII or finding out more about us, contact:

DR JONATHAN CLARK
SII DIRECTOR
+27 (0)21 650 3363
+27 (0)83 291 3750 (cell)
jon.clark@uct.ac.za

DR PATTI SILBERT
SII PROJECT MANAGER
+27 (0)21 650 3570
+27 (0)83 789 2044 (cell)
patti.silbert@uct.ac.za

www.sii.uct.ac.za

SII ACTIVITIES AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT
Participation in principals' Community of Practice. Organisational management support is provided to the School Management Team.

UNIVERSITY RECRUITMENT (100-UP)
Five learners in Grade 10, 11 and 12 participate in 100-UP in preparation for their tertiary studies

CURRICULUM SUPPORT
Teacher professional development includes classroom-based support for Mathematics, Sciences and English First Additional Language.

LEARNER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES
UCT student organisations:
- Ubunye (TeachOut): Grade 8 & 9 tutoring
- Inkanyezi: Grade 11 career guidance
- LAWCO: Grade 10 & 11 constitutional literacy
- Information Studies Honours students: Grade 10 & 11 computer literacy.

INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT
Library established by SII in partnership with The Bookery. Science laboratory refurbishment funded by UCT.
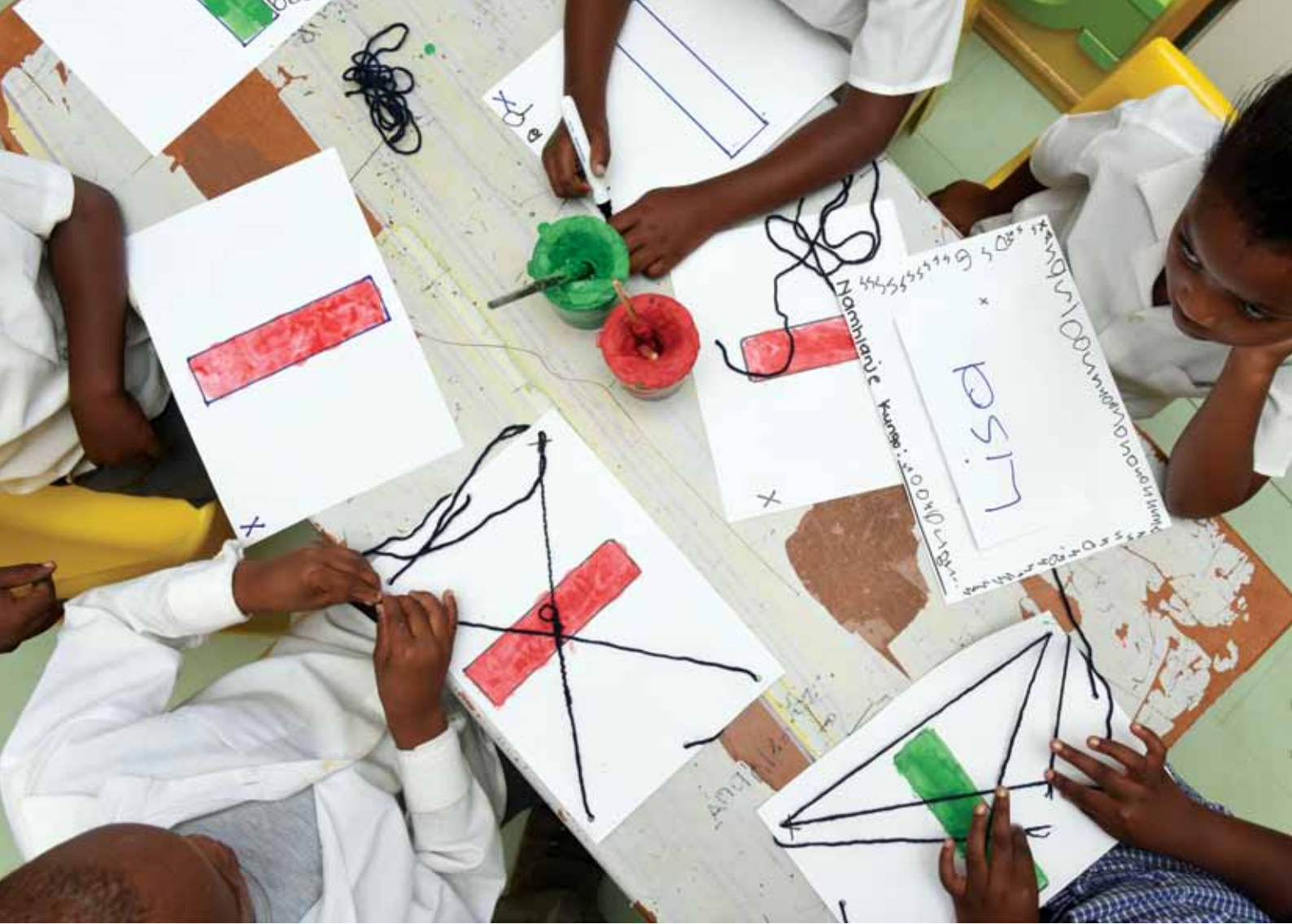
UCT PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
UCT student teachers are placed in the school for their teaching practice.

Leadership & management | University recruitment | Learner support programmes | UCT professional practice | Infrastructural development | Curriculum support

Our vision

We aim to develop strong and responsive university/school partnerships which contribute positively to long-term change in the classroom, the school and in the broader community.