



**Funda Wande**  
Reading for Meaning

**Western Cape**



2024

**#NelsonMandelaDay**

**What does it really mean to go the extra mile for a child's learning?**

**25 July 2023**

# It started with a question, not a plan.

What does it really mean to go the extra mile for a child's learning?

In 2023, as we marked our very first Mandela Day School Outreach, our team at Funda Wandé visited Cornflower Primary School in Mitchells Plain. We arrived with a shared sense of purpose, shaped by a difficult truth: according to the 2021 PIRLS results, 8 out of 10 children cannot read for meaning, and 1 in 7 cannot read a single word.

## Those numbers are more than statistics...

They reflect the everyday reality of classrooms across South Africa. They challenge us to think more deeply about what meaningful, lasting support looks like.

As we spent time at the school, listening and observing, it became clear that impact does not always begin with grand plans. Sometimes, it begins with noticing.

Tucked away within the school was an unused storeroom. Easy to overlook, easy to dismiss. But in that moment, it became a mirror for a bigger question: how many opportunities for learning are hidden in plain sight, waiting to be reimagined?

Through the Mandela Day challenge, we chose to see that room differently. Not as a place of storage, but as a place of possibility. Together with the school, we began the process of transforming it into a library, a space that could belong to every child, across every grade.

What followed was a collective effort grounded in care and collaboration. Our team contributed time, energy, and books. Generous partners, including ABC Press, supported with donations for both learners and teachers. Through our longstanding relationship with Book Dash, we were able to source affordable, high-quality readers to help build a collection that children could truly engage with.

“ Give a child the gift that lasts forever: **literacy.**”



# Creating a culture of reading

But beyond the physical transformation, something more meaningful took shape.

This experience reminded us that creating a culture of reading is not only about providing resources. It is about creating environments that invite children in, that affirm their place in the world of stories, and that nurture their confidence to read, imagine, and understand.

It also reminded us that going the extra mile is rarely about scale. It is about intention. It is about listening before acting, partnering rather than prescribing, and committing to change that extends beyond a single day.

We are grateful to Principal Ontog for opening her school to us and trusting us with this journey. Her leadership, alongside the generosity of partners like ABC Press, made it possible to turn a small, overlooked space into something meaningful.

As we reflect on this experience, we are reminded that impact often lives in these quiet transformations. In the moments where spaces are reimaged, where partnerships are formed, and where children are given not just the tools to read, but the environment to fall in love with reading.

If this story resonates with you, we invite you to be part of this ongoing journey. There are many more spaces waiting to be reimaged, and many more stories waiting to be told.

