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Being a **Partner for Possibility** opened my eyes and my heart. I learned that if you have a can-do spirit you can achieve amazing things.

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Anita Moerman van Blankenburg

Partner to **Lindelani Singo**

Many people think that in order to be involved with **PfP**, you have to have a CSI budget, but Anita Moerman van Blankenburg, an independent coach, psychometrist and consultant found another way to get onto the programme.

“I didn’t have funds of my own, but I really believed in the difference I could make, both because of my business experience as well as my skills as a coach and facilitator,” she says. “So I approached Lundbeck, one of my clients in the pharmaceutical industry, for a sponsorship for both my principal and me, and after I presented the concept to them, they agreed. I think my enthusiasm and strong desire to get involved was contagious!”

Anita says she’d attended a **Symphonia** information session, and was introduced to the school before she met Lindelani Singo, who would be her partner principal. “The first meeting where the principals and business partners in our **Community of Practice (CoP)** were introduced to each other was held at YBPS,” she says.

“I was so impressed by the school,” says Anita. “We were greeted by the prefects and escorted to the library where the meeting was held.

Although it was noticeable that the building was old and in need of repair, everything was neat and clean.

The children were respectful and all of them were neat and dressed in proper uniform. They seemed proud of their school and happy to be there. The teachers were friendly and looked confident and content.”

And yet, Lindelani had his frustrations. “Before enrolling on **PfP**, a lot of the time I was frustrated,” he says. “The department of education never listened to my vision and dreams. I felt like a zombie with no mind of its own.”

In addition, the school had been marked as a priority school because their ANA benchmark results were low. “Anita and I then introduced reading time and opened the library thanks to some sponsorship we received, and the teachers started to plan better after we implemented team planning. As a result our Maths results improved from 29 to 54, and in 2014 they had increased further to 64. English moved from 39 to 54, and in 2014 it increased to 72.”

Anita says she was delighted when she was allocated to Lindelani as a partner. “When I met him I could understand why the school was the way it was. He had done so much with so little,” she says. “But I went in with an open mind.



Lindelani Singo

Yeoville Boys Primary School



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The discussions we had were exploratory and innovative. I did not have an agenda to 'fix' anything, but rather to be helpful in whichever way I was equipped to do, and to introduce people to the school that would add value in areas that were not already addressed by the principal himself.

Together Lindelani and Anita identified areas of difficulty and need at the school, and looked at possible solutions. "One of the problems that Lindelani mentioned to me when I first met him was the unmet need for psychological support for children, many of whom are exposed to things outside the school that are emotionally damaging," says Anita. "I introduced the school to PsyCAD at the University of Johannesburg and as a result a number of social work interns were assigned to the school.

"Payment of school fees and parental attendance of meetings and parent evenings were some of the other problems the school faced. We brainstormed ways in which we could build the school's community, and after Lindelani started implementing this, things began to change."

Lindelani says that when he started with **PfP**, most of the staff members didn't understand what the programme was all about. "But after the **Time to Think** workshop, we ran a workshop for them on goal-setting, and this brought some light.

"Anita made an enormous contribution to the school, in all ways, big and small, from leadership training to organising sponsorship to reading stories to the kids – whatever was needed. She also organised the workshop on time management and facilitated it.

The staff really enjoyed that, and learnt a lot from it. The submission of documents increased significantly, with most teachers starting to meet their deadlines.

"The workshop on goal-setting really helped the staff to prioritise their work. Most of them indicate that now they are spending their time far more effectively.

"Anita also introduced us to Open Door music, where our learners are learning to play the guitar. They were our first partners. And Anita bought six small guitars for the learners, to complement this programme."

The school's community has also grown, and it is now truly at the centre. "Our parental commitment was frustrating, but now when we have parents' meetings we are able to have over 500 parents and we are so happy with this improvement," says Lindelani. "They keep time and support programmes within the school. Some even volunteer to assist where we need help."

Anita says being on the **PfP** programme has been an amazing experience. "I could get involved in something that really mattered, the next generation. Seeing the positive attitude of the principal and teachers, who often work under very difficult conditions and with such limited resources brought such gratitude to my heart for things I have taken for granted for so long.

"I was accepted and welcomed and made to feel like part of a big family, and it is always such a joyful experience for me to be at the school. I have a new appreciation and respect for the educators and school principals in South Africa and I wish that every school in the country could be part of **PfP**."

As for Lindelani, he says he feels "on top of the world. I have learnt to draw up business proposals, prepare presentation slides, conduct workshops, and approach sponsors. I have presented before a company CEO and a principal delegation, and done radio talk shows: my life has turned into something that I never dreamed of."

