



13 April 2012

Mr Alan J Whitaker
Chairperson
The Billion Child Appeal
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Of all the initiatives to turnaround South Africa's failing schools, the Billion Child Appeal must be one of the more credible non-governmental actions. It is also one of the most ambitious: "our goal is to help a billion children escape poverty over the next thirty years." I like this, for credibility and ambition are two of the missing ingredients in what governments often try to achieve on a large scale with reforming school systems.

The other missing ingredient of course is capacity, and this is where the Billion Child Appeal makes the case for support: training school management team across the country, and preparing parents for a much more active role in the lives of their children. Excellent. Schools do not change by themselves, and they certainly do not change by developing sophisticated policies without any regard for the on-the-ground capacity to turn policy ideals into practical reality. What the appeal also recognises is that resources are not the primary source of the crisis in South African education; it is about restoring our core values around teaching, learning, managing and leading young people.

With credibility, ambition and capacity, the Appeal has fired up the imagination of some leading voices in South Africa to get behind this important project for it seeks not only to change education in one country, but to serve the underserved across the planet by taking people seriously. It turns docile subjects, the premise of so much government policy, into active citizens, a mantra of new thinking among influential South Africans concerned about education.



As one who has worked inside schools as a teacher, and whose has studied those same schools from the outside as a researcher, I am delighted to throw my weight behind this stellar initiative which promises to succeed where so many others have fallen short. We are running out of time, and a billion children need us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jansen'.

Prof Jonathan D Jansen
Vice-Chancellor and Rector
University of the Free State