

Adopt-a-School helps matrices to achieve exceptional results despite challenges

Issued by [Adopt-a-School](#)

24 Jan 2017

Schools, with the support of the Adopt-a-School Foundation, are producing exceptional matriculants despite challenging conditions.



Lebogang Phosa, Modilati Secondary School

The reporting of matric results have become a matter for contentious debate in recent years. While such debate is healthy, it should not overlook the achievements of schools which lack many basic amenities. Some of these schools, with the support of public and private partnerships, are producing exceptional matriculants despite challenging conditions.

One example is Kgomotso High School in Pampierstad, a small rural town on the border between the Northern Cape and North West provinces. In the past, the school's biggest challenge was not the standard of education, but the provision of water and sanitation.

"On the days when we had no water, or when the toilets were blocked, we had to send learners home, often early in the day," says Mr Ernest Mothlaoleng, an educator at Kgomotso High School. "Not only did these issues impact a safe, conducive teaching environment, but not having a full school day places huge pressure on both learners and teachers in an already difficult teaching environment," he adds.

In 2013, the school was adopted by education NGO Adopt-a-School Foundation and the water and sanitation issues have since been resolved. "Now that we don't have to worry about water and sanitation interrupting our schooling we can focus on effective teaching and improving performance in all areas," says Mothlaoleng.

Other interventions, included the introduction of early morning classes for matrices to focus on revision and extra lessons, as well as learner supplementary programmes in mathematics and science over weekends and school holidays.

The results of these interventions are clear. The school's 2016 matric pass rate was 80.4% compared to 61% in 2015 – an improvement of 19.4 percentage points. The school also achieved its first-ever distinctions in mathematics and science.

Another example of a school rising above serious obstacles is Modilati Secondary School in Stinkwater, Hammenskraal, an impoverished corner of northern Gauteng. Modilati produced its first matric class in 2015 and since then the pass rate has increased from 65% to 75%.

The school achieved 41 distinctions in 2016 – the second most of any school in the district. Modilati's principal, Mr Sonnyboy Mpofo, was pleased with the results but stresses the importance of the quality of the passes. “The pass rate alone is not an indicator of success. The only acceptable passes are level five, six or seven (i.e. aggregate marks of 60% and above).”

These results were not achieved without an enormous amount of hard work. Mpofo credits the improvements in pass rates to the Grade 12 camp, a two-month intensive study programme held at the school in the run-up to the exams.

Learners slept at the school and woke up at 05h30 to prepare for the start of the normal school day at 07h00. After school they spent five hours in extra lessons, finishing at 22h00. The programme was made possible, in part, by Adopt-a-School Foundation.

Modilati Secondary School has produced exceptional achievers like Lebogang Phosa, who was awarded three distinctions, including physical science and mathematics. Thanks to winning a bursary, Lebogang is preparing to study Civil Engineering at the University of Pretoria. Another high achiever is Maringa Mmathaphelo who was awarded five distinctions and will be studying accounting at Wits University on a partial bursary.

At Tau Rapulane High School in Bodibe, North West, the pass rate jumped from 67% in 2015 to 84% in 2016. The school's principal, Mr Themba, said the involvement of Adopt-a-School was “a turning point for the school.”

“Thanks to the leadership and mentorship from Adopt-a-School, our educators were able to develop a strategy for improving results,” explains Themba. “We increased the number of extra classes offered and made ourselves available to learners in the mornings, in the evenings and on Saturdays. Educators also set personal targets for each learner and coached them when they were struggling to perform.”

Themba is most proud of those learners who persisted in the face of serious doubts. For example, progressed learner Edith Dingalo, who was moved into Matric after failing Grade 11 twice, managed to achieve a bachelor's pass (which qualifies her to attend a university).

“We are proud to be able to assist these schools in offering the kind of education that South Africa's next generation both needs and deserves,” says Steven Lebere, Executive Director at Adopt-a-School. “We are proud of the achievements of these schools and their learners. We look forward to continuing to support and improve results in 2017 and beyond.”

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