

# SOWETO SCHOOLS MAGAZINE

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### TEACHER OF THE MONTH

**MISS NOMUSA CELE  
HER PASSION FOR  
MUSIC AND  
DEVELOPMENT**

**SOWETO PRINCIPALS  
COMMIT TO EXCELLENCE**



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RIGHTS**

**KNOW YOUR LEADERS**

**A conversation with a local teacher on her mission  
to revive choral music in Soweto schools.**

# REVIVING THE TRADITION OF SCHOOL CHOIR



On this edition of Teacher of the Month, we talk to a dedicated educator from Thembalihle Primary School, Miss Nomusa Cele, who is bringing back the rich tradition of school choirs in Soweto. With a deep passion for choral music, she is not only nurturing young voices but also instilling discipline, teamwork, and confidence in her learners.

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## **What inspired you to become a teacher, and how did your journey lead you to Thembalihle Primary School?**

I worked as a facilitator at Fulton School for the Deaf, assisting young children with disabilities. My passion for working with them inspired me to make a difference in the lives of other children.

Finding a job in KZN was difficult, but I was determined to pursue my goals. I moved to Johannesburg in search of opportunities. My first teaching job was in Cosmo City, where I worked for three months. I later joined Thembalihle, a place where I believe I was meant to be, to nurture and support young learners' dreams.

## **What role do you believe music and singing play in a child's overall development?**

Music keeps children away from negative influences, offering them a fun and engaging alternative to social media.

When involved in music, they eagerly look forward to rehearsals, where we play, laugh, and bond.

While I may not always reach a child in the classroom, music becomes the key to connecting with them and uncovering their hidden potential.

## **You're known for your dedication to your students. What do you find most rewarding about teaching young minds?**

Children's innocence and curiosity inspire me. They love exploring and trying new things. Even when I feel demotivated, remembering my journey reminds me that nothing can stop my love for working with kids.

## **How did you first get involved with the school choir, and what does choral music mean to you personally?**

I first led my high school choir, and choral music has always been my therapy—it heals my soul.

When I joined Thembalihle in 2014, I established the school's first choir.

Music is my life, and I dedicate my time to community choirs, where I find joy and fulfillment.

**Can you tell us about a memorable moment with the school choir that made you especially proud?**

One of my most memorable moments was in 2019 when our choir secured first place at the provincial level.

**How did your passion for choral music begin, and what keeps you motivated to share it with learners?**

I was very active in high school, serving as the assembly leader. My classmates always encouraged me to continue leading songs, often saying I had the voice of an angel. They felt deeply moved whenever I sang.



**Miss Nomusa Cele, Grade 6 teacher at Thembalihle Primary School**

**How do you balance your responsibilities as a teacher with leading the choir and supporting other activities?**

It's not easy, but where there's love, there's a way. By 7:30, I'm at school preparing for the day, and after classes end at 14:10, rehearsals begin. I stay connected with parents through a WhatsApp group, especially since rehearsals run late.

Despite the challenges, I always find a way to balance my work and extracurricular activities.

**What challenges have you faced in promoting choral music in the school, and how have you overcome them?**

The biggest challenge is the lack of time for extracurricular activities. To support my learners, I sacrifice personal and family time, dedicating myself to them.

Even during holidays, I choose to spend that time with my students.

**What message would you like to share with parents about supporting their children's participation in music and other school programs?**

These children are truly special. We're not just spending time; we're investing in their future and creating lasting memories. They will always be grateful for these opportunities. I encourage parents of musically gifted children to continue supporting them, knowing they are in good hands.



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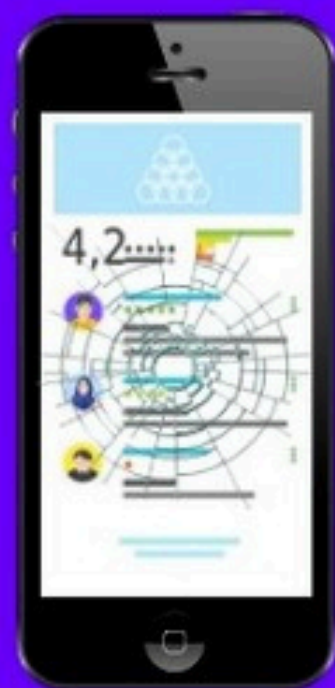
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# Soweto Principals Commit to Excellence at Pledge Signing Ceremony

On Tuesday, 4 March 2025, High School principals from the Johannesburg North District, under the leadership of Director Miss Vuyiswa Cindi, gathered for a Pledge Signing Ceremony.

The event brought together all Soweto principals, emphasizing the importance of commitment to academic excellence.

The primary objective was for each principal to sign a pledge, setting specific targets for their schools' matric results at the end of the year.



The atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm and determination as leaders took this symbolic step towards improving education standards.

The event began with an in-depth reflection and analysis of the 2024 matric results across the district. Miss Cindi presented a comprehensive report on school performance, highlighting key achievements and areas for improvement.

Overall, she expressed satisfaction with the efforts of the principals and their dedication to student success.

Her words of encouragement reassured the audience that they were on the right path and that their hard work was recognized and appreciated.



Schools and principals who achieved outstanding matric results in the previous year were honored for their excellence.

This recognition served as motivation for others to strive for similar success, fostering a sense of healthy competition and a collective goal of raising the academic bar.



## THE PLEDGE



The celebration of past achievements reinforced the belief that consistent effort and strategic planning can yield remarkable outcomes.

With matric results improving across the country, there is optimism that Soweto schools will perform even better in 2025. The commitment demonstrated at the Pledge Signing Ceremony sets a positive tone for the year ahead.



With continued support from the district leadership, teachers, and the broader community, Soweto's schools are poised for academic success and a brighter future for their learners.

# Deputy Speaker visits Ditawana Primary School



Mrs Vuyo Mhlakaza-Manamela, the Deputy Speaker at the Gauteng Legislature, recently visited Ditawana Primary School as part of an outreach program aimed at educating learners about how the Legislature functions.

During her visit, she engaged with the students, explaining the role of the Legislature in governance and decision-making. To support their learning, she brought educational materials, helping to make the subject more accessible and engaging for young minds.



Her passion for education was evident as she interacted with the learners, encouraging them to take an interest in civic matters and the workings of government.

In addition to the learning materials, Mrs. Mhlakaza-Manamela made a special effort to support the boy learners by bringing them gifts and goodies.



**Gauteng Deputy Speaker  
Vuyo Mhlakaza-Manamela**

She highlighted the importance of giving attention to boys, who she feels have often been overlooked in education support initiatives.

Ditawana Principal Nomasonto Luvuno expressed her heartfelt gratitude for the Deputy Speaker's visit and generosity, emphasizing the positive impact such engagements have on young learners. The visit was an inspiring and memorable experience, leaving the students motivated and eager to learn more about governance and leadership.



# **Zithathele Primary Commemorates Human Rights Day with a Meaningful Assembly**

On March 20, 2025, Zithathele Primary School in Orlando East, held a special assembly to commemorate Human Rights Day.

The event aimed to educate learners about the significance of this national holiday beyond just a day off. Through engaging discussions and activities, both students and staff explored the history and importance of human rights in South Africa, fostering a deeper understanding of their role in society.



Principal Mrs. Mkhulise emphasized the school's commitment to holistic education, stating, "At Zithathele, we take pride in extra and co-curricular activities, not just academics."

The initiative ensured that learners not only recognized the importance of Human Rights Day but also appreciated its relevance in their daily lives. By integrating such meaningful events into the school calendar, Zithathele continues to nurture well-rounded and informed future leaders.





# Why Grade 13 Could Be the Game-Changer Our Kids Need

By Siphiwe Ngema

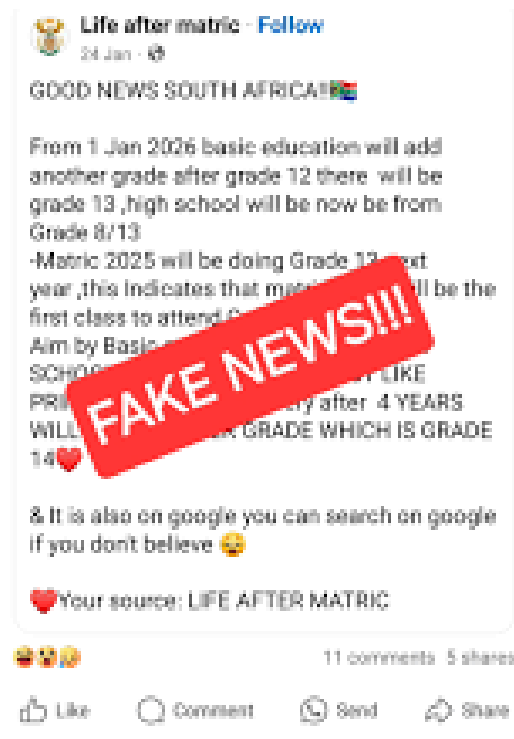
I've been mulling over this buzz about a potential Grade 13 in South Africa's education system, and honestly, I think it's a conversation worth having. Sure, the Department of Education has shot down the rumors, but what if we dared to dream a little?

Imagine an extra year that doesn't just tack on more exams but actually gives our kids a fighting chance to figure out life after high school. I'm not talking about coddling them—I'm talking about equipping them with skills and confidence to step into adulthood without tripping over the edge of matric.

Let's face it: the stats paint a grim picture. Over 50% of Grade 12 grads are either jobless or stuck in limbo a year after matric, according to the South African Human Sciences Research Council.

That's not just a number—it's a crisis. Too many of our youth, especially from poorer communities, hit a wall after high school. University applications, money woes, and the pressure to "make it" pile up, and what do they get? A forced gap year they didn't ask for, filled with frustration instead of opportunity.

I can't help but wonder: why are we okay with letting them flounder when we could build a bridge instead?



Here's where Grade 13 could shine, and I'm sold on the idea of making it practical. Forget more chalk-and-talk—let's give them internships, entrepreneurship boot camps, and workshops on stuff like financial literacy or even how to drive.

Picture this: local businesses partnering up to show kids what's out there, letting them dip their toes into careers they might never have considered.

This could be a “transition year” for life skills. I'd argue it's not just a bonus—it could be a game-changer for kids who feel lost post-matric.

Of course, not everyone's on board, and I get it. Critics say it's too costly for families already stretched thin, or that we should fix the lower grades first. Fair points—we can't ignore the cracks in the system.

But I'm not ready to ditch the idea just because it's tricky.

A well-designed Grade 13, with mentorship from local pros and a focus on real-world prep, could level the playing field, especially for underprivileged kids. It's not about delaying the inevitable; it's about giving them a shot at a future they can actually grab hold of.

So, what do you think—could this be the second chance our youth deserve?





## Raising Faithful Hearts: Guiding Our Children with God's Love

**Rev. Sizwe Tshabalala**

As parents in Soweto, we carry the sacred responsibility of shaping our children's hearts and minds, not just for the world they see today, but for the life they will lead tomorrow. Introducing our children to faith and talking to them about God is one of the greatest gifts we can offer.

Faith provides a moral compass, a sense of purpose, and a foundation that steadies them through life's storms. In a community rich with resilience and spirit, exposing our young ones to God's love helps them understand their worth and builds values like kindness, honesty, and respect—values that echo the best of who we are as a people.

Why does this matter? Because our children face a world that can sometimes feel chaotic, pulling them in directions we cannot always predict. Talking openly about God plants seeds of hope and strength they can lean on when challenges come. It's not about forcing belief, but about sharing stories—like David's courage or Esther's wisdom—that show them they're never alone. When we pray with them, read scriptures together, or sing hymns as a family, we create a space where faith becomes a living, breathing part of their lives.



This isn't just tradition; it's a shield and a light, guiding them to make choices rooted in integrity and love.

So how do we begin? Start small—share a Bible story at bedtime, say a prayer before a meal, or take them to church to feel the warmth of our Soweto congregations. Let them ask questions, even the hard ones, and answer with patience and honesty. Show them faith in action by living it yourself—let them see you forgive, give, and trust in God through your own ups and downs. Our children learn most from what we do, not just what we say.

By weaving faith and values into their everyday lives, we're not only raising good sons and daughters but also building a generation that will carry Soweto's spirit forward with grace and purpose.

Warm regards,  
Reverend Tshabalala

## Orlando High Strengthens Unity Through Fun and Team Building



On February 28, 2025, Orlando High School hosted a vibrant Fun Games, Fun Day event aimed at fostering unity and creating a safe and inclusive environment for learners. The day was filled with engaging team-building activities that encouraged students to collaborate, communicate, and build strong relationships.

Learners participated in various games designed to promote teamwork, problem-solving, and a sense of belonging within the school community.

The event was more than just a day of fun—it was a valuable opportunity to reinforce the school's commitment to unity and student well-being. Through these interactive activities, learners not only developed teamwork skills but also experienced the joy of working together toward a common goal.

Orlando High School continues to prioritize holistic development, ensuring that students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in a supportive environment.



# BOOK REVIEW

## BOOK: Unimportance

### AUTHOR: Thando Mgqolozana

Unimportance is a thought-provoking novel by South African author Thando Mgqolozana.

It offers a raw and insightful look into student life at a South African university, exploring themes of academic pressure, activism, and self-discovery.

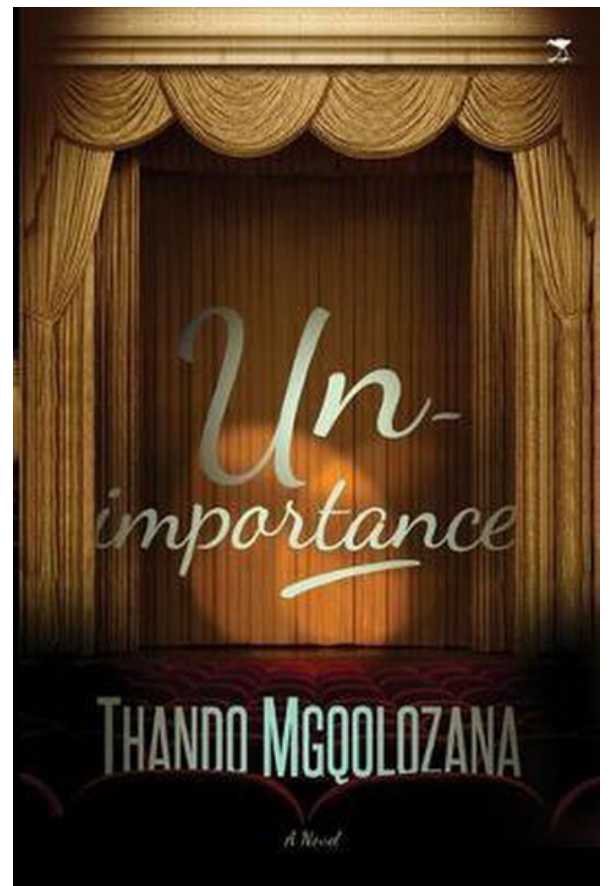
The novel follows a young student on the eve of an important SRC (Student Representative Council) election, but instead of focusing on his campaign, he finds himself reflecting on personal struggles, societal expectations, and the weight of responsibility placed on young leaders.

The book sheds light on the challenges students face, from financial strain to mental health battles and the conflict between ambition and self-doubt.

Mgqolozana's writing is engaging and authentic, making readers feel immersed in the protagonist's inner turmoil.

For high school learners, especially those aspiring to pursue higher education, Unimportance provides a glimpse into the realities of university life.

For parents, it offers a deeper understanding of the pressures young people navigate in their academic journeys.



**Thando Mgqolozana is a South African author, curator, and producer, renowned for his insightful novels and contributions to African literature. He is also the founder of the Abantu Book Festival, which celebrates African storytelling and culture.**

**For more about his work and contributions, you can visit his official website: [mgqolozana.com](http://mgqolozana.com). Additionally, Thando Mgqolozana maintains an active presence on Instagram, where he shares insights into his work and personal life: [@thando\\_mgqo](https://www.instagram.com/thando_mgqo)**

## Teachers, Here's How to Build Stronger Relationships With Boys

By [Elizabeth Heubeck](#) & [Francis Sheehan](#)

Boys are relational learners - they learn best when they have a positive relationship with their teachers. Studies strongly suggest it; male students eagerly confirm it.

But teachers sometimes fail to see it.

Boys tend to do a good job of keeping their emotions in check, masking their vulnerability, and failing to ask for help when they need it—a nod to cultural norms learned early in childhood, experts say. (Think: Boys don't cry.)

But these stereotypical gender norms can keep boys and their teachers from building strong relationships, which research shows is critical to helping boys thrive in school.

"Teachers find the idea of boys as relational learners very compelling, very convincing," said Michael C. Reichert, a psychologist, author, and child advocate. "I think we all know the truth. It's just obscured by these stereotypes that interfere with our confidence in what we perceive."

[This Article was first published on EdWeek.org](#)







# Break Through to Boys With These Relational Strategies and Tips

Teachers, start building positive relationships with boys in your class by using the following eight “relational strategies”—identified via surveys and interviews with 1,000 teachers and 1,400 male adolescent students by psychologist Michael C. Reichert and lifelong educator Richard Hawley.

## Teachers who have strong relationships with their male students...

- DEMONSTRATE** mastery of their subjects.
- MAINTAIN** clear and high standards of classroom conduct and quality of work—and assure students that they can achieve them.
- ENGAGE** with a student’s personal interest or talent—from Star Wars to soccer.
- SHARE** a common personal interest with a student (e.g. athletic, musical, mechanical).
- POSSESS** a common characteristic with a student (such as a physical feature, cultural background or ethnicity, or a shared challenge).
- RESPOND** to boys’ uncooperative or defiant behavior with restraint and civility.
- REVEAL** vulnerability, especially as it relates to learning, and explain how they work to overcome it.
- **REACH OUT** to students and their families, be available for conversations, and take an interest in what students do outside of the classroom.

## Dos and Don’ts to creating and maintaining strong relationships with your male students:

	
<h3>Do</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Be aware that strong student- teacher relationships are central to boys’ success in school.</li><li>•Recognize your role as the “relationship manager” in student-teacher relationships.</li><li>•Know that female teachers can effectively establish strong learning relationships with boys, too.</li><li>•Understand that boys want their teachers to know them beyond their identity in class.</li></ul> <p>Seek support from colleagues on building and maintaining positive student relationships.</p>	<h3>Don’t</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Wait for students to establish rapport.</li><li>•Underestimate the respect boys feel for teacherswho are experts in theirssubject matter.</li><li>•Assume that boys gravitate to teachers who are “easy graders.”</li><li>•Let your emotions take over when boys shut down or otherwise turn their backs on a learningrelationship.</li></ul> <p>Expect a student to take the lead in repairing a rift in your relationship</p>

# ABOUT US

Soweto Schools Magazine is an online monthly publication published by Funda Smart.

We feature stories and events about local schools and education news.

Soweto Schools Magazine is distributed to more than 5000 parents in Soweto via Email & WhatsApp.



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If you have stories or you want to feature your school, drop us an email.

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