

SOWETO SCHOOLS MAGAZINE

MONTHLY PUBLICATION

PRINCIPAL OF THE MONTH

WE BID
FAREWELL TO
BOEPAKITSO'S
PRINCIPAL
MRS LILY
MBATHA



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Boepakitso's Lily Mbatha retires after decades of service – her name now lives on in the school's new Reading Centre.

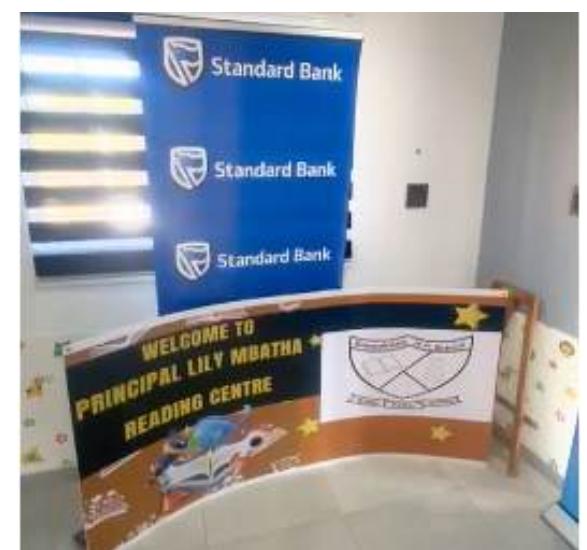
A Principal's Final Chapter: Wisdom from Mrs. Lily Mbatha

After decades of dedicated service to education, Mrs. Lily Mbatha, the principal of Boepakitso Primary School in Diepkloof, Soweto, will be retiring at the end of the year. Her journey of 42 years as an educator and leader has been marked by a deep passion for literacy, a commitment to empowering learners, and a belief in the transformative power of reading.



In honour of her unwavering dedication, the school has named its newly launched Reading Centre after her—an enduring tribute to her legacy.

For Mrs. Mbatha, reading has never been just a skill—it's been a foundation for dignity, curiosity, and freedom. Over the years, she witnessed how lack of access to books and quiet reading spaces held back many learners. This inspired her to champion the creation of a Reading Centre that serves not only learners, but teachers as well—providing structured reading sessions, storytelling, book clubs, and professional development tools for educators. Her vision was simple but powerful: to raise confident, critical thinkers who read to understand, to lead, and to grow.



As she prepares to retire, Mrs. Mbatha encourages Soweto principals to lead with compassion and vision, and urges parents to be active partners in their children's education.

The Reading Centre, she says, is not just a building—but a promise that the future of Boepakitso learners will be built on literacy, unity, and the belief that every child deserves to be heard, nurtured, and empowered.

As she prepares to retire at the end of this year, Mrs. Lily Mbatha reflects on her incredible journey as a teacher, leader, and literacy advocate at Boepakitso Primary School. Her legacy lives on through the newly launched Reading Centre named in her honour. In this interview, she shares insights from her long career and leaves a message of hope and encouragement for the school community.

How long have you been a principal at Boepakitso Primary School?

I've had the honour of serving as a principal for 27 years. It has been a journey of growth, both personally and professionally. Over the years, I've worked with passionate educators and learners from all walks of life.

Being a principal taught me patience, vision, and the importance of leading by example. Every challenge was a lesson, and every success a shared victory with my school community.

What inspired the creation of the Reading Centre at Boepakitso?

The idea came from a need I saw every day—children who wanted to read but didn't have access to books or a quiet space to explore the world through stories. I have always believed that reading empowers children to think for themselves and make informed choices. The Reading Centre is more than a room with books; it's a space of inspiration, imagination, and growth. It represents our commitment to developing lifelong learners.

What message would you like to leave for Soweto principals and parents?

To my fellow principals—I encourage you to lead with passion and purpose. The work is not easy, but it is meaningful. Keep your schools grounded in values that uplift our learners. To the parents, please know that your involvement is not optional—it is essential. Support your child, work with the school, and remember that when we walk together as educators and families, we build a stronger future.



What does it mean to you to have the Reading Centre named after you?

It's a deeply emotional and humbling honour. When I first heard about the decision, I was overwhelmed with gratitude. To have something so meaningful carry my name is a reminder that hard work and faith never go unnoticed.

More than anything, I hope this Centre continues to serve children for generations, and that it becomes a place where young minds are nurtured to dream big and read wide.

Ditau Primary brings June 16 to life with Sarafina spirit



Ditau Primary School in Orlando East celebrated June 16 in true South African style, honouring the legacy of the youth of 1976 through vibrant performances and joyful remembrance.



Learners dressed up and performed iconic songs from Sarafina!, bringing energy, spirit, and historical awareness to the day. The event was not only educational but also fun and engaging, allowing learners to express themselves while reflecting on the bravery of the youth who came before them. It was a powerful and lively commemoration that reminded everyone of the importance of freedom, youth voices, and cultural pride.



Orlando High explores Rail Careers at PRASA Expo

Grade 12 learners from Orlando High School had an exciting and educational experience this month as they attended the PRASA Career Expo held in Johannesburg on the 24th.

The event was designed to expose learners to various career paths within the railway and transport sector, helping them make informed choices about their futures beyond matric.

As part of the experience, the learners also visited Gibela, a company known for manufacturing modern passenger trains in South Africa. There, they learned more about careers in engineering, rail operations, manufacturing, and technical support.

The trip opened their eyes to new possibilities and highlighted how industries like PRASA and Gibela can play a role in shaping their futures. It was a day filled with inspiration, learning, and a glimpse into the world of rail innovation.



It All Starts at Home

Children are always watching. Long before they are taught about money, they are quietly learning – from how we earn, spend, stress, and survive. This column reflects on the silent lessons families pass down, often without realising it, and invites us to become more mindful, more open, and more empowered in shaping the financial mindsets of the next generation.

Before we ever hold money in our hands, we watch how it moves through our homes.

For many of us, our first lessons about money were not formally taught, they were absorbed through lived experience. We saw the tension in the room when expenses piled up and were due. We learned the difference between wants and needs not from worksheets, but from watching our caregivers make impossible choices. Some of us became skilled at stretching small amounts to last through the week, while others grew up in households where money was not really discussed but always felt.

In my research with young people navigating university life, many described growing up with an unspoken awareness of financial strain. Even without explanations, they understood when money was tight. Some recalled learning through observation - watching how food was portioned differently at month-end or how their families adapted when income was uncertain.

These are powerful lessons - passed down through experience, not conversation.



Boniswa Siwundla Madikizela CA(SA)
Senior Lecture at University of Johannesburg

Home: The Hidden Classroom of Money



The truth is: every home is a classroom. And parents, whether they mean to or not, are financial educators. Children take note of how money is spoken about, how it's managed, how conflict arises around it, and how their families recover from hardship. These everyday moments quietly shape how they will relate to money in future.

This column will explore those early, often unspoken lessons - how financial habits are formed, how they're passed down, and how we can shape them more intentionally. Not to assign blame, but to begin with awareness.

Because money doesn't just live in our wallets - it lives in our memories, our hopes, and the stories we carry from home.

About the author

[Boniswa Siwundla Madikizela CA\(SA\) is a financial literacy advocate, educator, and founder of FLIC SA. As a Senior Lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, she brings over a decade of experience to her mission: helping families and communities understand how financial habits are passed down – and how to shape them with intention.](#)

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Fundraising and Infrastructure: How SGBs can Drive School Development

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) play a vital role in South African schools—not only in policy and governance, but also in raising the funds needed to improve facilities and learning resources.

A landmark example is Fairbairn College in Cape Town, where the annual “Big Walk,” a parent- and learner-led fundraising event, has consistently generated over R500,000.



These funds have enabled the construction of vital amenities like a swimming pool, computer centre, and sports fields—all while galvanizing school spirit and community engagement.

Closer to home, township SGBs can—and do—spark similar initiatives. As one study noted, even no-fee schools often lack a giving culture, but when parents commit to small-scale fundraising activities—like class raffles, bake sales, or community drives—they can bridge the gap between Department budgets and real infrastructure needs .

Indeed, provincial speeches have highlighted how active SGBs can uplift school performance, reduce vandalism, and support teaching and learning—showing a clear link between fundraising and school success.

For Soweto schools, it’s time to make fundraising a community affair. SGBs should lead with clear plans and financial accountability to parents, as expected by law.

Parents, teachers, and local businesses can come together—via fun events like sponsored walks, community markets, or co-sponsored facility upgrades—to ensure our schools have the facilities and support they deserve.

When an entire community steps forward, small contributions grow into big impact—and our township schools can thrive.

Thembalihle shines at ABC Motsepe Schools Choral Eisteddfod

Top Soweto School Takes 3rd Place in Regional Competition Thembalihle Primary School has once again raised the flag high for Soweto after securing 3rd place in the regional round of the ABC Motsepe Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE).

Representing all Soweto schools, Thembalihle competed against top schools from other districts and showcased their musical excellence with passion, harmony, and discipline. Their achievement not only highlights their hard work and talent but also places Soweto firmly on the choral music map.

The ABC Motsepe Schools Choral Eisteddfod is a prestigious national competition organized by the Department of Basic Education in partnership with the Motsepe Foundation.



It aims to promote music education in schools, encourage cultural exchange, and nurture the artistic talents of learners. Schools from across the country participate in various categories, celebrating South Africa's rich choral heritage and youth development through music.

Thembalihle Primary has built a strong reputation over the years as a leader in school choral music within Soweto.



Thembalihle Primary has built a strong reputation over the years as a leader in school choral music within Soweto. Their consistent dedication to excellence and artistic discipline has earned them the title of Soweto's top school in choral performance.

The school's choir is not only a source of pride for the learners and educators but also a shining example of how arts and culture can enrich education and build confidence among young people.

We congratulate Thembalihle Primary School for their outstanding achievement and for carrying the name of Soweto with pride and dignity.

Their success is a reminder of the immense talent that exists in our township schools, and it calls on the community to continue supporting the arts in education. Thembalihle's journey in choral music is far from over—and Soweto will be singing along every step of the way.

Special recognition goes to Miss Nomusa Cele, whose unwavering dedication and leadership have been instrumental in Thembalihle's continued excellence in choral music.

Faith through challenges: A Word to Parents

Pastor Nkosi

Life will always come with challenges, and that includes the lives of our children.

I want to speak to you today—not as an expert, but as a fellow parent and community elder who understands how heavy your heart can become when you see your child struggling.

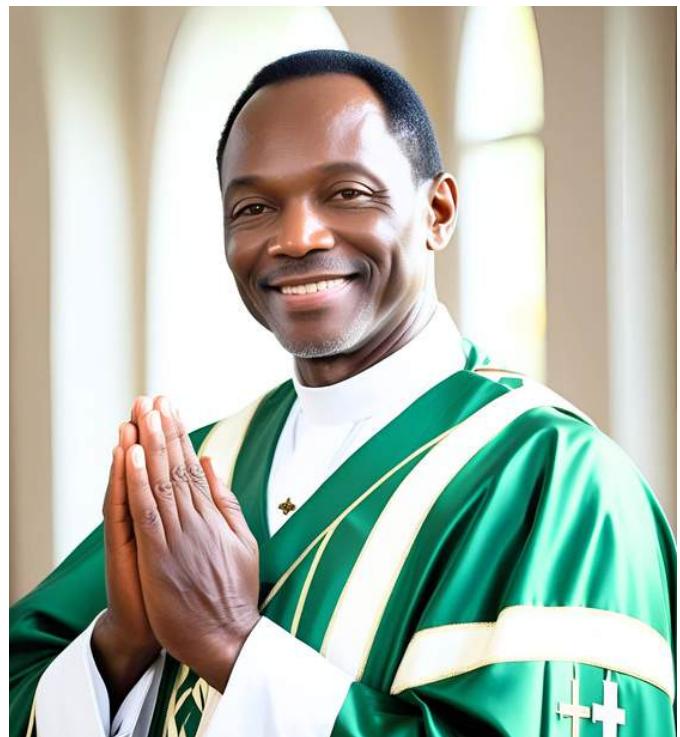
Whether it's poor performance at school, bullying, peer pressure, or even family problems, it's easy for a child to feel lost. And when our children are lost, we too feel helpless.

But I want to remind you—this is where faith steps in. We must teach our children that tough times don't mean the end. Let us speak hope into their hearts.

Let them know that failure is not final, and disappointment is not defeat. Remind them that God sees them, even in silence.

When they feel unseen or unheard, let your words and prayers carry them.

Read with them, pray with them, speak life over them. Just your presence and love already brings healing.



We don't need to have all the answers. But we do need to keep showing up—with patience, with grace, and with faith.

I encourage you, parent to parent—build a home where faith lives, so that when storms come, your child knows where to run for shelter. God trusted us with these little lives.

Let's trust Him to guide us as we walk with them through every challenge. Stay strong. Stay prayerful. And above all—stay faithful.

Yours in Grace,
Pastor Nkosi

BOOK: Book Review: Raising Boys

in the Twenty-First Century

AUTHOR: Steve Biddulph

Raising Boys in the Twenty-First Century by renowned psychologist Steve Biddulph is a must-read for parents, educators, and guardians raising boys in today's rapidly changing world.

With warmth, humour, and real-life insight, Biddulph offers practical guidance on understanding boys' emotional, social, and psychological development from infancy to adulthood.

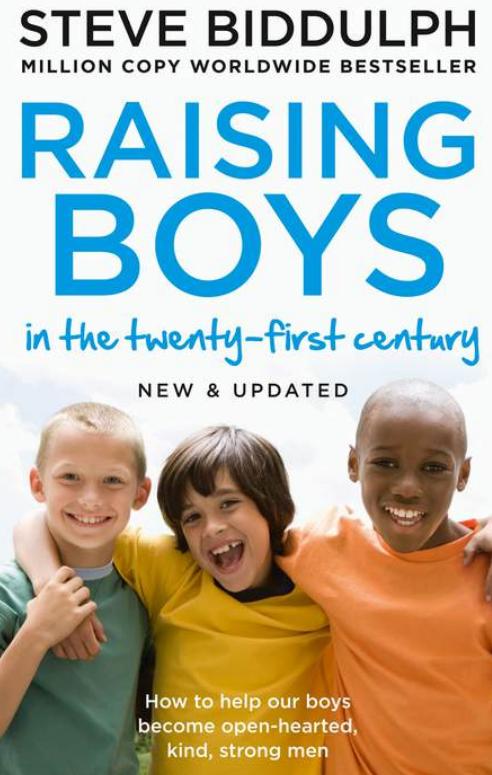
The book explores the critical stages of a boy's growth and shows how parents can positively support each phase, with particular focus on how boys process feelings, learn responsibility, and respond to role models.

What makes this book powerful and relevant—especially in the South African context—is its call for a deeper emotional connection between boys and their caregivers. In communities where boys often face pressure to "be tough" or bottle up emotions, Biddulph's advice on nurturing sensitivity, discipline, and confidence feels refreshing and urgently needed.

He also discusses the influence of father figures, male mentors, and how schools and families can work together to guide boys toward responsible, healthy adulthood.

For readers of the Soweto Schools Magazine, this book provides not just parenting advice, but an opportunity to reflect on the kind of men we want our boys to become. It's a gentle reminder that raising emotionally intelligent, confident boys requires intention, love, and support from both home and school.

Raising Boys is both an educational and empowering read that encourages parents to be active, informed, and compassionate in their parenting journey.



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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