

SOWETO SCHOOLS MAGAZINE

MONTHLY PUBLICATION

RISING STAR

**AREFA
MOGAPI
SPELLS HER
WAY TO
GLORY**



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Ten-year-old Arefa Botho Mogapi proves that dedication, talent, and a love for learning can take you far – all the way to the top 10 finalists in one of Soweto's biggest spelling competitions.

Top 10 Finalist in Maponya Mall Spelling Bee shines with Academic prowess and Passion for words

At just 10 years old, Arefa Botho Mogapi from Ditawana Primary School has a list of achievements that many older learners would envy.

Her academic journey began with excellence in Kindergarten and has continued year after year, with multiple first-place awards in Mathematics, English, and Life Skills.

She has also represented her school and the province at high-level competitions, including winning the Gauteng Foundation Phase Provincial Award in 2023 for Life Skills, beating competitors from 74 schools.

In May 2025, her talents took centre stage once again when she achieved second place in the Johannesburg North District Sesotho Reading Aloud competition.

Now, she's aiming for another big win — Arefa is among the Top 10 Junior finalists for the Maponya Mall Spelling Bee Competition, with the finals set for 13 September 2025.

For her, spelling is more than memorising words; it's a celebration of language, culture, and knowledge.

Speaking about the upcoming finals, Arefa says, "I'm excited and a little nervous, but I've been practising every day. Winning would be amazing, but I just want to do my best and make my school proud."

Outside her school achievements, Arefa dreams big. She aspires to become an Astrophysicist, fascinated by planets, stars, and the potential for humans to live on Mars.

With her determination and passion for learning, there is little doubt she will continue reaching for the stars — both in the classroom and beyond.





Championing reading through her Book Club

Beyond competitions, Arefa is a passionate literacy advocate.

She founded her very own book club at school to create a platform where learners can share the joy of reading, discuss their favourite books, and even dream about writing their own short stories.

Her vision extends to building a library filled with works by African authors, giving children in her community access to literature that reflects their own heritage and experiences.

For Arefa, reading is not just a hobby — it's a way to empower young minds, spark creativity, and inspire future leaders.

Principal Nomasondo Luvuno describes Arefa as “a remarkable learner whose drive and focus are beyond her years.”

She adds that Arefa’s leadership in academic and extracurricular activities has made her a role model for the entire school, and her achievements are a source of pride for Ditawana Primary.





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Ditau Learners Sharpen Skills at UJ Maths Camp

Holiday programme boosts numeracy through hands-on learning, giving learners the opportunity to explore advanced concepts, work in teams, and experience university life first-hand.



Learners from Ditau Primary School in Orlando East are making the most of their winter break by attending extra Mathematics classes led by their dedicated Numeric Coordinator, Mr. Evans.

From 30 June to 3 July, the group participated in an intensive Maths Camp hosted at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), designed to strengthen problem-solving skills and build confidence in the subject.

This initiative is part of the school's ongoing commitment to academic excellence, ensuring learners are well-prepared for future success.

The camp also exposed learners to inspiring mentors and practical activities, helping them see how mathematics is used in everyday life. Many left the programme motivated and excited to tackle new challenges in the classroom.



Leresche Primary Bids Farewell to Beloved Educator

After over three decades of dedication, Grade 2 teacher Jenny Maswanganyi retires, leaving behind a legacy of love and learning.

Leresche Primary School in Orlando East recently held a heartfelt farewell ceremony for Jenny Maswanganyi, a cherished Grade 2 foundation phase teacher who has retired after more than 30 years of dedicated service. She started teaching in 1991.

Known for her gentle nature, unwavering patience, and deep commitment to her learners, Jenny was described as a “rare gem” whose presence brought warmth and inspiration to the school community.

Colleagues, parents, and learners celebrated her remarkable career, expressing gratitude for the invaluable role she played in shaping young minds and building a strong educational foundation for generations of children.



We Don't Talk About Money

How everyday family life shapes our children's financial future



“Every home is a classroom. And parents, whether they mean to or not, are financial educators.”

But what happens when the classroom goes quiet? When money becomes a subject, we tiptoe around?

In many homes, money is not openly discussed. We talk around it in sighs, in silence, in side comments, but rarely about it.

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

For children growing up in these households, that quiet becomes its own kind of education. When we shield young ones from money matters, we may think we are protecting them. But often, we are teaching them that money is something to fear, avoid, or feel ashamed of.

Even without explanations, children learn. They notice the mood shifts at month-end, the tension when school fees are due, the sudden quiet when they ask for something. Without words, they begin to understand that money is stressful and that it is not their place to ask. Silence teaches too. And often, it teaches uncertainty.

“Every home is a classroom. And parents, whether they mean to or not, are financial educators.”

Boniswa Madikizela

Home: The Hidden Classroom of Money

But it doesn't have to stay that way. We don't need perfect finances to speak honestly. A simple, age-appropriate conversation, "This is how we plan our spending," or "Here's what I wish I had learned earlier", can go a long way.

Talking about money at home is not about numbers. It is about values, choices, and trust. Because breaking the silence can be the first act of financial empowerment - for ourselves, and for those quietly learning from us.

What this means for Parents & Educators

- **Silence around money teaches children too but often leaves them uncertain or anxious.**
- **You do not need perfect finances to start the conversation, just honesty and care.**
- **Simple, age-appropriate chats can build lasting financial confidence.**
- **By naming what was once unspoken, we begin to rewrite the next generation's money story.**
- **Start small. One open conversation can make a world of difference.**

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.

[Click here to read more about Boniswa](#)

Empowering Parents Through Active Participation in the SGB

Stronger parental involvement in School Governing Bodies can transform education and improve learner success in Soweto schools.

In many Soweto schools, the School Governing Body (SGB) plays a vital role in shaping the future of our children. Yet, the true power of the SGB lies in active parental participation.

When parents take up leadership roles in the SGB, they help influence decisions on budgets, policies, infrastructure, and the overall direction of the school.

This involvement ensures that the school's priorities align with the community's needs and that learners have the best possible environment to succeed.



Active parent participation also creates a stronger bond between home and school. It allows parents to understand the challenges educators face and to contribute solutions, whether through fundraising, volunteering, or helping create a positive learning culture.

By working together, parents and educators can address issues like overcrowding, lack of resources, and learner discipline more effectively. The message is clear – every parent has a role to play, and when they step forward, the entire school community benefits.

SCHOOL SAFETY

SCHOOL
SIGNAGE

Vol.1



A Learner's Mind Can Only Grow Where It Feels Safe

Safety signage also plays a psychological role:
It creates structure and predictability.
Helps learners feel protected and valued.
Reduces anxiety, especially among younger learners.
Builds a shared understanding of what's right and wrong in school spaces.



Community Responsibility: Be Part of the Change

Whether you're a parent, teacher, sponsor, or school leader—your role is vital. Let's not wait for a tragedy or crisis to act. By installing and supporting safety signage, you help:

- Prevent future incidents.
- Encourage open communication.
- Promote discipline and school pride.



This back-to-school season, let's give our children more than pens and books—let's give them an environment that speaks of safety, respect, and responsibility.

BACK TO SCHOOL SAFELY

As learners return to classrooms across South Africa, the focus on school safety has never been more critical. With challenges, such as bullying, gender-based violence (GBV), vandalism, and disciplinary breakdowns affecting many schools—safer and effective school safety signage is proving to be one of the simplest yet most powerful solutions.

Creating a Safer Learning Environment

As learners settle into the new term, signs such as 'No Bullying Zone', 'Parents Please Help', or 'Report Safe in Confidence' send powerful messages that:

- Shape behaviour.
- Detter misconduct.
- Promote emotional safety.
- Reinforce the school's culture and vision.

When these messages are visible every day, they guide learners' conduct and help teachers maintain order.

TOP NEWS

What Is School Safety Signage?

Safety signage refers to visible, informative, and values-driven boards placed strategically throughout the school environment to:

- Detter against harmful behaviour.
- Promote values like respect, discipline, and accountability.
- Guide learners to safety during emergencies.
- Reinforce school rules and anti-bullying policies.
- Provide important contact numbers for reporting abuse or threats.

These signs are not just decor—they are daily reminders of what is expected from every learner and staff member.

The Company you need for a safe school

If your school is still without safety signage, let's change that. Join hands with School Safety and our partners to sponsor, install, or promote safety signage in your community schools.

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"A school that speaks safety through signs, teaches safety through values."

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Teaching children Gratitude in a materialistic world

Pastor Nkosi

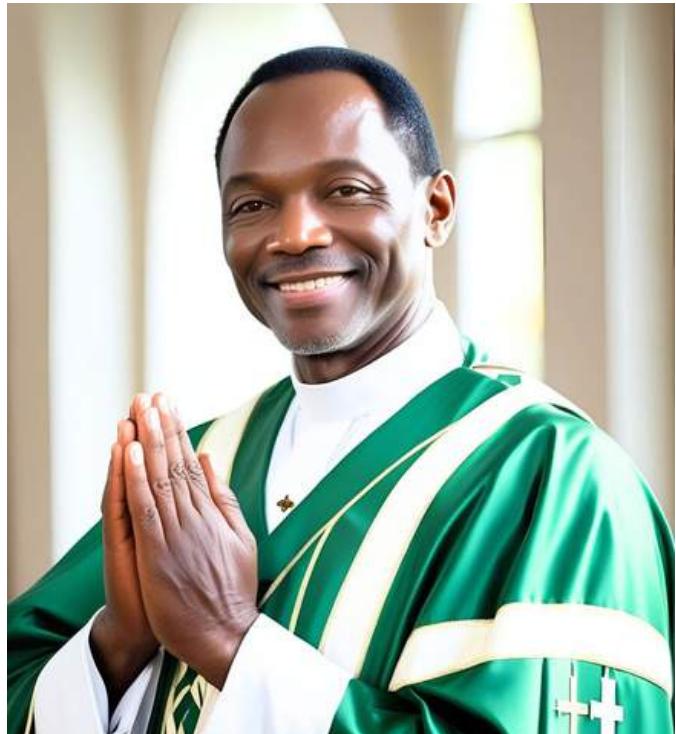
Dear parents, in a world where children are bombarded daily with messages that more is better, teaching gratitude has never been more important.

We live in a time where it's easy for our young ones to measure their worth by the gadgets they own, the clothes they wear, or the lifestyles they see on social media.

Yet true joy and contentment don't come from things, but from a heart that appreciates and values life's blessings.

Gratitude is a muscle that needs to be trained early. It starts with us as parents - modelling thankfulness in our own lives, saying "thank you" often, and pointing out the small blessings we encounter daily.

When your child sees you being grateful for a meal, a sunny day, or a helping hand, they learn to see the world differently.



Encourage them to keep a "gratitude journal" or to share one thing they're thankful for at the dinner table each night.

If we plant the seeds of gratitude now, we will raise a generation of children who are less entitled, more compassionate, and truly content - no matter what life gives or withholds.

That is a gift far greater than anything money can buy.

Yours in Grace,
Pastor Nkosi

BOOK REVIEW

BOOK: The Boy Who Never Gave Up: A Story of Grit and Triumph

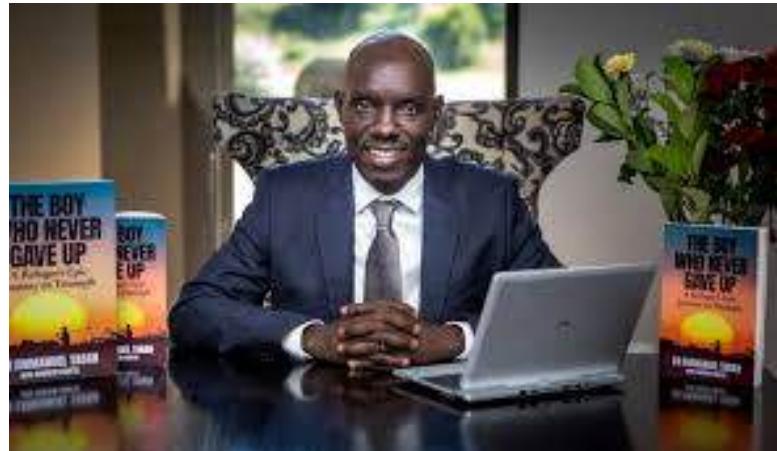
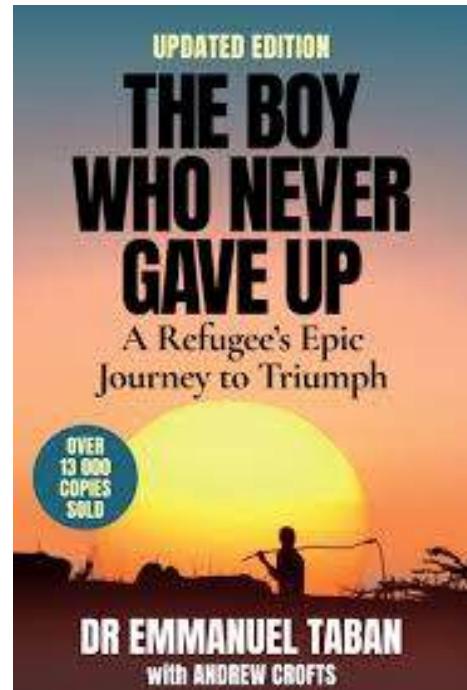
AUTHOR: Dr. Emmanuel Taban

Dr. Emmanuel Taban's memoir, *The Boy Who Never Gave Up*, is an extraordinary tale of resilience, determination, and hope.

Born in war-torn South Sudan, Taban fled his home as a teenager, enduring immense hardship as a refugee before making his way to South Africa.

Against overwhelming odds, he worked tirelessly, pursued his education, and ultimately became one of the country's leading pulmonologists — famously helping to treat severe COVID-19 cases.

His story is a living reminder that perseverance and self-belief can overcome even the toughest beginnings.



For parents and learners in Soweto, this book offers more than just inspiration — it is a roadmap for rising above adversity.

Taban's unwavering commitment to education, discipline, and hard work proves that one's background does not define their destiny.

It challenges parents to nurture resilience in their children and urges learners to push forward, no matter the obstacles.

The Boy Who Never Gave Up is a must-read for every home, offering lessons that go far beyond the classroom.

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