

Education Initiative



About the Education Initiative

Thungela embarked on this initiative following an observation that several organisations mostly support high school learners from grade 10 to 12. These learners are supported in preparation for attaining excellent matric results and they are also offered bursary opportunities to study at various tertiary institutions.

As a result of this, there is less or limited attention paid to foundation to immediate phases.

It is for this reason that the Thungela team, during deliberations, concluded that a focus on the foundation to immediate phases would add more value in communities where the company operates.

Transitioning from grade 3 to 4 presents numerous challenges for learners. These challenges include psychological and physiological changes, transitioning from using a pencil to a pen, adapting from being familiar with one teacher to many teachers as well as the introduction of new subjects.





Following the deliberations, an independent education consultant was enlisted to conduct an in-depth assessment of learning and teaching conditions in grades R and 4. The assessments confirmed that most learners progress to higher grades still demonstrating inadequate literacy and numeracy skills.

The Thungela Education Initiative was born following the baseline assessment outcomes, and several engagements with the Mpumalanga Department of Education officials at all levels including district, circuit and schools.

The initiative will benefit 45 schools from both Nkangala and Gert Sibande districts covering Steve Tshwete, Emalahleni and Govan Mbeki local municipalities. This is inclusive of farm schools neighboring our operations.

The interventions range from capacitating and strengthening school management teams, encouraging parental involvement, refurbishment of infrastructure for conducive learning and teaching, provision of learning material and equipment, capacitation of educators, provision of psychosocial and direct learner support.

The programme will be executed and monitored through a Local Management Committee with oversight from Thungela and the Mpumalanga Department of Education through a Provincial Programme Task Team.

The journey to crafting the Thungela Education Initiative

► 2023

Consolidate findings

- Stakeholder feedback on findings, aligning on interventions.
- Education Initiative approval.

► 2022

Envision our contribution to education where we operate problem statement

- Identify key stakeholders and commence engagement.
- Conduct baseline assessments.

► 2024

Official launch

- Interventions commences.



Areas of Focus

Our purpose is to responsibly create value for a shared future.

Through our ESG framework, we committed to upholding ESG standards whilst striving to outperform on the social aspects. Thus, our priority in Social is creating shared community value from our operations and activities.

Guided by our ESG ambition, we developed a Socio-Economic Development (SED) Approach that guides the focus of our community programmes. Education and Skills Development is one of the focus areas of the SED Approach and the impact goal for this focus area, is to enable access to quality education and skills development.

Through interventions that will be implemented as part of the Initiative, Thungela in partnership with the Mpumalanga Department of Education will enable access to quality education while enhancing the skills of the teachers.



Baseline assessments conducted identified challenges faced by learners.

Grade R Findings



- Outdoor equipment is either inadequate or non-existent.
- Some schools do not have adequate classroom space.
- Most schools accommodate Grade R learners in solid brick structures with an exception of a few accommodated in containers and precast walls. There is inadequate ventilation in these structures.
- Toilets in 35 schools are not age appropriate.
- Teacher and learner ratio in most schools exceed the recommended ratio guideline.
- Some teachers do not meet the basic qualification requirements.
- A number of schools do not have fire extinguishers, while 9 schools have unserviced extinguishers.
- Grade R learners use the same sick bay as older learners. Limited first aid kits are available.
- Nutrition minimum requirements were met.





Interventions



- Invest in both outdoor equipment and indoor learning material.
- Enhance existing infrastructure to comply with Requirements.
- Assess and customize toilets to be age appropriate.
- Invest in training ECD educators to at least NQF level 5 and provide training on reusing recyclable materials for learning purposes.
- Provide Grade R or ECD sections within schools with First Aid kits.
- Provide ECD teachers with fire safety training, including monitoring of fire extinguisher.
- Develop a toolkit for role players within the ecosystem to enable implementation training programme for the schools governing.



Baseline assessments conducted identified challenges faced by learners.



Grade 4 Findings



- Transitioning from using a pencil to a pen is a challenge for learners.
- Inadequate book provisions resulting to sharing of books.
- The physical and emotional development of learners in their early teenage years creates learning challenges and bullying.
- The Natural Science and Technology curriculum is a new addition which is difficult for learners.
- English as language of instruction is also difficult for most learners to understand.
- Teacher and learner ratio in most schools exceeds the recommendation, leaving some learners feeling left behind during lessons.
- More subjects become part of the Grade 4 curriculum and this puts learners under pressure and creates challenges with their time management skills.
- Pre-existing health issues of parents contribute to learner absenteeism.
- There is no parental support for homework supervision.

Baseline assessments conducted identified challenges faced by teachers.

Teachers play an important role in the advancement and development of learners. Their contribution and capacity is critical to the learner's educational needs.

Findings



Different learners needs

- Learners have different learning needs and teachers feel inadequate to support these needs.
- Often, learners who have different learning styles and require individual attention are put in one overcrowded class, making it difficult for a teacher to provide individualised attention.
- The timing of learner assessments is inconsistent, creating difficulty for teachers to identify interventions at an early stage.
- Learners progress from the foundation phase with content gaps.

Lack of resources

- Limited learner resources (i.e. textbooks) means teachers have to share/split resources amongst learners. This results in bullying and classroom disruption.
- Limited resources further result in classwork not being completed on time.
- There is overcrowding in classrooms, with teacher to learner ratios being 1 teacher to 84 learners.



Teacher's psychosocial needs

- Teachers are distressed because of the many roles they need to play in schools with limited resources.
- Frequent changes in the curriculum require teachers to constantly change their teaching methods. Teachers are unable to keep up with the changes and this affects their mental health.
- There are high rates of teacher replacements due to ill health which affects learners learning and progress.
- The implementation of evolving education policy is often met with incapacity from the teachers, contributing to their stress levels.

Interventions for Grades 1 - 4 learners and teachers



- **Infrastructure:** For conducive for learning and teaching.
- **Teacher Development:** Support and coaching.
- **Resourcing:** Provision of textbooks and stationery, and promote re-use.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Partner with an academic institution for secondment of psychologists to targeted schools.



- **Additional Learner Support:** After school English and Science program/tutoring – fun and interactive, sponsor an annual life skills camp, support an introduction of holistic learner assessment and support teachers in terms of gaps identified.
- **Learner Assessments:** Partner with the Mpumalanga Department of Education to provide holistic and standardized learner assessments.
- **Parental involvement:** Implement parental involvement programmes.



