The Khulani Schools Program (KSP) comprises five essential components and programs that work together to empower and uplift students in under-resourced schools. These include community building, providing vital support to create a solid and collaborative school community; psychosocial support, addressing the emotional well-being of students and teachers; career guidance, equipping learners with the necessary tools to make informed decisions about their future paths; digital skills, empowering educators and students with essential computer skills for the modern world; and the Khula Funda Literacy Program, fostering a love for reading and improving literacy skills among learners. Together, these components form a comprehensive and holistic approach to enable the growth and development of students within the KSP.
KSP emphasizes community building, the cornerstone of our support initiatives. We engage with schools through various channels, including meetings with principals and the School Management Team (SMT), interactions with task team members, Teacher Communities of Practice (COP), and an annual Town Halls to train the School Management Teams (SMT) and School Governing Body (SGB) on asset-based community building practices.

Before implementing the Faranani Infrastructure Project (FIP), an innovative response that enhances the learning environments in our schools, we host town hall meetings to establish relationships with local stakeholders.

During the Town Halls, school leaders have the opportunity to enhance school operations and improve their leadership skills. Since the program’s inception in 2021, we have positively impacted 113 teachers, empowering them to create a nurturing environment for their learners.

Additionally, we involve the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) to influence their peers positively.

Through these efforts, KSP fosters a healthy, conducive, and functional school culture within and among our partner schools. These initiatives strengthen our bonds with the communities we serve and pave the way for sustainable and impactful change.
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1.2. Psychosocial Support

Under-resourced schools in South Africa face significant psychosocial stressors, affecting both students and teachers. Recognising the limited consideration given to teachers’ mental health, Trevor Noah Foundation (TNF) partnered with My Online Therapist (MOT) and the Johannesburg Parent and Child Counselling Center (JPCCC) to provide psychosocial support (PSS) workshops. These workshops addressed educators’ personal challenges, capacitating them to establish support networks for referring students in need. Through these interventions, TNF successfully reached 292 educators, fostering their well-being and enabling them to better support students facing socio-economic challenges.

1.3. Career Guidance

According to *Pillay (2020), career guidance is a pressing need for South African secondary school learners to make informed career choices and mitigate the negative consequences of uninformed decisions. Recognising the confusion surrounding the transition from secondary education to further studies and employment, TNF partnered with Gradesmatch to provide personalised career planning and assistance with higher learning and funding applications for grade 12 students.

In addition, our inaugural career expo in 2022 had Grade 9 and 11 learners engage with professionals from diverse fields. In these crucial grades, subject choices and post-school education applications begin. A significant achievement was supporting 829 learner applications; to foster sustainability, we trained 12 teachers across our KSP secondary schools on effective methods of providing career guidance support.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1.4. Digital Skills

Preparing learners with 21st-century skills, particularly in Information and Community Technology (ICT), is crucial. However, educators’ lack of digital fluency poses a significant barrier to effective teaching and learning *(Chigona, 2018)*.

To address this, TNF, in partnership with Edunova and with funding from Microsoft, focuses on building educators’ basic computer skills and encouraging their use in the classroom.

We have established Learning Centers in three secondary schools and equipped them with a total number of 80 laptops. However, access to ICT infrastructure alone is insufficient if educators and learners lack ICT skills. Through our collaboration with Edunova and Microsoft, we train teachers and learners and have initiated after-school clubs to teach coding skills.

This culminates in an annual coding competition among the three schools. To date, we have supported 270 educators and 3449 learners in developing digital skills within our secondary schools.


Junior’s Story

Junior Philip Sibusiso Nxusa, a self-taught Information Technology Enabler (ITE), hails from Naturena, near Eldorado Park. Junior’s passion for coding and programming led him to participate in an after-school digital skills program introduced by TNF at Willow Crescent Secondary School. After winning a coding competition, Junior was offered a full-time job by Edunova to work at the school.

Junior, reflecting on his journey, states: “While I may know more now than I did when I first started coding, I’ll never stop learning and improving.” The partnership between TNF, Edunova, and Willow Crescent Secondary has played a crucial role in Junior’s success. The digital skills and literacy programs provided by TNF and Edunova aim to prepare youth for the global world of work and enhance their classroom learning experience. Junior’s plans include further skill development and obtaining a degree in Systems Management.
The 2016 Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in South Africa revealed that 78% of grade 4 learners struggled to comprehend written text in any assessed language (Howie et al., 2017). To address this challenge, our partnership with Nalibali focuses on delivering mother-tongue literacy programs to primary schools in Braamfischerville. By emphasising the use of children’s home languages, we aim to cultivate a strong reading culture, as children readily connect with literature in their first language.

Our initiatives include hanging libraries stocked with books and supplements and training and support from Story Sparkers to help teachers implement a “drop everything and read” (DEAR) lesson approach. Additionally, we train parents and caregivers on how to foster a reading culture at home. A key outcome is to improve learners' reading abilities and ensure a successful transition from primary to secondary school. Since the program’s launch in August 2022, we have reached 118 foundation phase teachers and impacted 4 624 learners.