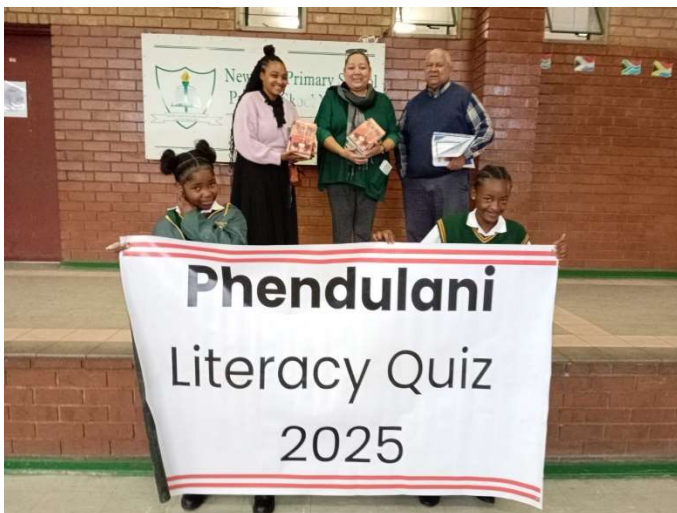


Phendulani Quiz

2025 Report



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Overview and highlights of 2025

This year has seen an increase in the number of regions and schools participating in the Phendulani Literacy Quiz. New areas were Stanford, and Bloemfontein. This was made possible by the contributions of books by Exclusive Books, sponsorship by AESSEAL Trust and book donations by Pan Macmillan, Penguin Random House, Tafelberg, Cover2Cover, Rona Souter and purchases of discounted books from Jacana and author Edyth Bulbring. The quiz could not operate without the generosity of the above organisations.



I am also immensely grateful to all the regional coordinators who organise the quiz days. I enjoy the compiling of the questions for the quiz and sending the books to each region and running the quiz in new regions until a coordinator is found. What a wonderful group of people around SA support and are involved in this literary endeavour.

The educational, social and psychological impact of the quiz is gaining ground and being elaborated on by teachers, librarians and the children themselves— encapsulated in the few quotes below, and elaborated in the regional sections of the report:

“The Phendulani Quiz makes learners forge friendships and creates a climate of collaboration and care. So much learning takes place. Not only are literacy skills developed, but life skills that enhance each participant's life. This was such an enriching experience for our children.” *Mrs Rustin, Grade 6 Educator, Harmony Primary School*

“It taught us knowledge, teamwork, care and love. It taught us Attitude + Aptitude = Success.” *AK, Grade 6 learner, Harmony Primary School*

The nail-biting difference between the winners is an indication of the hard work of all the participating schools. “Indeed to tell you about our winners Wilhelmina Hoskins. On one of my visits I found the Phendulani team in a class room with no desks and about two chairs discussing the books. Their commitment was astonishing. Westbury primary met regularly on Saturdays and the teacher arranged food every time. Great commitment.” *Cyril Turton, Readers are Leaders, Bosmont.*

In Newclare, the children who participated in the Phendulani teams came top of their classes, according to Cyril Turton.

Marj Brown

Phendulani founder and national coordinator

Franschhoek Phendulani – 16 May 2025

(Report by Paul Crankshaw)

The young readers of Franschhoek were again part of the town's literary festival this week, competing in the annual Phendulani Quiz hosted by Wes-Eind Primary School.

The quiz brought together eight teams of the best readers from four Franschhoek primary schools – Wes-Eind, Dalubuhle, Groendal and Wemmershoek. Having read the prescribed selection of ten books, each team answered questions on four different themes – delivered by quizmistress and Phendulani founder Marj Brown.

Honours on the day went decisively to Wes-Eind Primary, whose two teams took first place and third place respectively. Dalubuhle Primary also shone, taking second place in a close-run competition.



Wes-Eind Primary – winners of the Franschhoek round of Phendulani – with author Siphokazi Jonas (far left) and Phendulani founder Marj Brown (far right)



Dalubuhle Primary took second place in Franschhoek

Franschhoek Literary Festival organiser Candice Kerchoff said the Phendulani Quiz is a vital part of the festival's outreach to young readers in the valley. Kerchoff secured exciting book prizes for the themed rounds and for the teams placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd, as well as word games and chess, "to build critical thinking". "The readers of today will be the leaders of tomorrow," said Kerchoff, "and building a culture of reading is how an important way that the festival builds a literate, empowered and equitable society."

The event had the added sparkle of respected guest speakers, who inspired the teams and the audience on how they can travel the world through books and through reading, reach their aspirations and dreams.

Paul Siguqa, owner of Klein Goederus wine farm on the main road into Franschhoek, urged the pupils to explore new worlds through books – and to discover the joy of reading – while opening doors of understanding and opportunity.

"Words are the way that we understand and learn – right from road signs to text books," said Siguqa. "They help us to navigate life and to achieve our goals as people and as communities."

Further inspiration came from author and poet Siphokazi Jonas, who was also a featured speaker at the festival. Jonas mesmerised the youngsters with the places around the world that her writing and poetry had taken her, and quizzed them about which countries and cities they wanted to visit when they grew up.



Siphokazi Jonas had the children in Franschoek enthralled with her stories

“I came from a small village in the Eastern Cape – Qonqo – that few people have heard of, but my dream of writing has taken me far and wide,” she said. “Reading can take you to any place in the world, without even leaving your town; but reading can also help you learn enough to be whatever you want to be – so that you can visit these places in real life.”

Of the ten books they read for the Phendulani Quiz, the young readers’ favourite choices were written by South African authors. They included ‘Girls Don’t Do That’ by Banyana Banyana star Thembi Kgatlana and ‘I am Shudu’ by Shudu Fhadzo Musida.

Stanford Phendulani – 24 May 2025

(Report by Marj Brown and Paul Crankshaw)

The town of Stanford near Hermanus in the Western Cape saw its first Phendulani Literacy Quiz on Saturday 24 May, with four local primary schools participating.

Hosted by Children’s Book Network (CBN), the quiz was used to assess how well the children were understanding the content of CBN’s reading and learning materials. With an audience of teachers and parents, the four teams of Grade 4, 5 and 6 children from [school’s names] gathered in Stanford’s church hall for the event.

Each team had been given books to read from CBN’s carefully developed and selected Reading toolbox and quizmaster Marj Brown – who started Phendulani 18 year ago – was there to ask them questions from each book. The participants were able to consult quietly with their team members before jotting down the answers.

The quiz took the form of four sessions, each with their own theme – and participants submitted their answers at the end of each session. There was a winning team for each session, and book prizes were handed out. Marj also threw in extra questions for fun in between the sessions, just to feed the growing excitement of the morning. These spot questions were rewarded with R20.

Total scores for the whole quiz were then tallied up, and the winning teams were announced.



Certificates and book prizes were handed to the three winning teams in Stanford

The scores confirmed that there was a high level of comprehension among the readers of the CBN books, showing both the suitability of the reading levels and the interest that the readers showed in the topics covered by the book selection. An evaluation sheet was filed in by each participant, and their favourite book was written by CBN coordinator Lesley Beake!

CBN is planning a follow-up quiz in Hermanus.



Cape Town Phendulani – 21 October 2025

(Report by Karen Hampson)

On Tuesday 21 October 2025, seven schools from the Western Cape gathered together at Muizenberg Junior School for the annual Phendulani Literary Quiz.

The participating schools were Sid-G-Rule Primary, Heathfield Primary, Claremont Primary, Westlake Primary, St Anne’s Primary, Muizenberg Junior and new-comers to the quiz, Harmony Primary. Each school fielded two teams of six learners from Grade 5 to 7.

The twelve books that the learners read and prepared for the quiz ranged from quite easy to fairly challenging. Five of the twelve selected books were written by local authors. The most popular book this year was James Patterson’s *‘Middle School: My Brother is a Big Fat Liar’*, while the most challenging book for most, was *‘10 Inspiring Singers, Writers and Artists’*.

Mrs Rona Souter, volunteer librarian at Harmony Primary, said of the quiz, “It was fantastic for the Harmony learners to be part of a positive experience after the endless cycle of violence they are exposed to on a regular basis. It was wonderful to see so many teams taking part and to know that so many children are still excited about reading.”

Rona wrote the following article to express the full impact of the quiz on the participants, and collected some feedback from the teachers and learners:

A Story of Hope from Steenberg

On Tuesday, 21 October 2025, learners from Harmony Primary excelled at the Phendulani Literacy Quiz, hosted by Muizenberg Junior School—taking first and second place in the competition. This year marked the 9th annual Phendulani Literacy Quiz in the Cape.

Eleven Harmony learners represented the school at the event—one short of a full complement—after safety concerns led a parent to keep their child home due to the recent surge of violence in Steenberg. Despite this setback, the teams’ dedication shone through. Competing against 12 teams from six schools, Harmony Team 1 narrowly edged out Harmony Team 2 by a single point to secure the top two positions overall.

The achievement followed months of preparation. Since April, the learners had been reading and mastering the content of 12 books under the guidance of dedicated volunteers from the Homework Enrichment Lifeskills Programme (HELP), who coached them during first interval every Monday and Wednesday. Their commitment and teamwork culminated in a thrilling four-round competition filled with excitement, laughter, and pride

Feedback from school staff

Mrs Manasse, Principal, Harmony Primary School:

“A big ‘well done’ to our amazing learners who shone brightly in the Phendulani competition. We are so proud of your outstanding achievement, you make us all proud - keep shining, keep striving and keep believing in yourselves. To the other learners, let's be inspired to partake in such activities and continue to make our school proud!”

Mrs Rustin, Grade 6 Educator, Harmony Primary School:

“The Phendulani Quiz makes learners forge friendships and creates a climate of collaboration and care.

So much learning takes place. Not only are literacy skills developed, but life skills that enhance each participant's life. This was such an enriching experience for our children.”

- J.N. - she has become quietly strong and assertive. Her self belief and confidence have soared. She wrote a short character sketch after reading some of the Peanut Jones and the Twelve Portals book. This is an amazing achievement from a learner who was feeling overwhelmed by the amount of reading. She has pulled herself together and is trying. If the lesson that she has learnt from this is to take a deep breath and persevere then she is already a winner.
- T.B. I have never seen T.B. as confident and buoyant. He needed these sessions with you to learn how valuable and needed he is in this world.
- K.J. and I.O. are confident and forthcoming. I.O. is highly sensitive and has never volunteered to participate knowing that an audience would be focusing on her. This process has allowed her to expose being vulnerable safely.
- M.W.'s mother couldn't believe that her daughter was participating in a literacy compilation. M.W. related her mother's reaction with such pride.
- I.T. and I.T. The twins are now friends and, despite what you see, are actually supportive of each other. Thank you for giving them that scope. They are in the process of applying for a bursary. The skills that you have imparted will have assisted them in this regard.
- S.Q. has formed a friendship with the twins. This will help boost his confidence.
- Z. W. contributes during lessons and has even voiced criticism during a discussion in the classroom. Something she never would have done previously.
- S.v.W. has been experiencing a very difficult period. Today brought so much joy and excitement into her life.

“What a positive and uplifting experience this has been.”

Feedback from Grade 6 Learners

“I enjoyed working together and reading books. It expanded the way I see things and my imagination grew.” *SvW, Grade 6 learner, Harmony Primary School*

“I enjoyed this competition very much, the experience was amazing and we learned a lot from this competition. We learned team work. We gained a lot of knowledge. We had a lot of fun and we loved it.” *ZW, Grade 6 learner, Harmony Primary School*

“I enjoyed this amazing experience and the knowledge that I learnt. The fun questions that was asked and the team work that came with it. I made new friends and people got to smile cause of the quiz.” *Grade 6 learner, Harmony Primary School*

“It taught us knowledge, teamwork, care and love. It taught us Attitude + Aptitude = Success.” *AK, Grade 6 learner, Harmony Primary School*

“If I haven't been encouraged to keep reading we probably would not have come second. Thank you for not quitting on us.” *TB, Grade 6 learner, Harmony Primary School*

Bosmont, Riverlea, Newclare and Westbury Phendulani – 6 September 2025

(Report by Cyril Turton, Readers R Leaders founder and coordinator)

The Phendulani Literacy Quiz 2025 was held on 6 September at Dowling Avenue Primary School in Westbury.



Westbury Brigade

Readers R Leaders recognise the quiz as the largest community-driven literacy event in our areas. The quiz continues to unite diverse social and economic groups through the power of reading. This year's event featured ten participating primary schools: Westbury, Dowling Avenue, Everest, Newclare, Bosmont, Bosmont Muslim, GR Harris, Riverlea, Wilhelmina Hoskins and Bree.

Four of these schools fielded two teams. The total participant was eighty-four learners. The learners were accompanied by their educators, principals and parents.

In addition to the participants, parents and teachers attended the event as well. The local Westbury Brigade marched through the streets of the area with a Phendulani banner which brought along a following of community members. This activity added to the excitement of participants and community.

Many people in the area were introduced to the quiz when three participating schools were interviewed by the local community radio station, Koffifi Radio, three days before the event.

The environment of support and enthusiasm from the community will no doubt leave a positive impact in the communities that RRL work in. It was always the intention of RRL to create a Reading explosion in the communities. The quiz contributes to this awareness of reading and the importance of reading in our children's educational future.

The opening address, welcoming the participants, community and quiz mistress was given by Mrs Robertha Bennett. Mrs Bennett who is herself a volunteer at Newclare Primary School library. A key message delivered by Ms Bennette was her role in preparing the learners, but emphasising the importance of volunteering, and the need for many more volunteers to assist with reading competency in our communities.

Spontaneous speech by teachers from Wilhelmina Hoskins and Dowling Primary schools, explaining to the audience the educational value of the reading process of the eleven books on their children's educational future.



Winners from Wilhelmina Hosking

The spot questions aimed at the audience proved to be immensely popular with audience members jostling to answer questions.

The most memorable highlight of the event was the ousting of Newclare Primary School who won the quiz for three consecutive years. The announcement of the winner sent shock waves of surprise and excitement. Wilhelmina Hosking, (the area is extremely poor with huge unemployment numbers) the winner of the 2025 Phendulani Quiz.

Equally exciting was the tie between Newclare Primary and Bree Primary school. Only the second time that Bree participated in the quiz. A sudden death playoff question was won by Newclare Primary with Bree taking the third position. This was a good indication of the high level of the competition. Newclare Primary, who won the competition for three years in a row, losing out on the first position and been challenged for the second position by Bree Primary.



Bree Primary School took 3rd position

Top three schools from the Bosmont, Riverlea, Newclare and Westbury Phendulani:

Position	Primary School	Total score / 40
1 st	Wilhelmina Hoskins	32
2 nd	Newclare (1)	31
3 rd	Bree (2)	30

The nail-biting difference between the winners is an indication of the hard work of all the participating schools, according to Cyril, who talks about their enthusiasm – often in the face of few resources.

“On one of my visits to Wilhelmina Hoskins Primary, for instance, I found the Phendulani team discussing the books in a classroom with no desks and about two chairs,” he says. “Their commitment was astonishing. Westbury Primary met regularly on Saturdays and the teacher arranged food every time. Great commitment.”

Later in the year, another impact of the Phendulani quiz was felt at Newclare Primary, when the quiz winners were the ones performing best in their schoolwork. This media release tells the story:

Reading quiz champions in Newclare take top academic honours

When Newclare Primary School handed out its academic awards for 2025, it was no surprise that the ten top achievers were all past participants of the Phendulani Quiz.

According to ex-trade unionist Cyril Turton, who has hosted the Bosmont Phendulani Quiz for more than five years, there is a strong correlation between these children’s enjoyment of literature and their academic achievement.

“Their school results prove that the Phendulani Quiz is playing a significant role in these youngsters’ lives,” said Turton. He explained that Newclare Primary had entered two teams of six learners each in this year’s quiz, with the teams being placed second and thirteenth.

“In the school prizegiving, 10 of the 12 learners were top of their class, receiving first, second or third prize honours,” he said.

Turton is no newcomer to the value of reading, having started Readers are Leaders in [year] in the areas of Bosmont, Riverlea and Newclare. Growing up in this area during apartheid, he was friends with struggle poet and author Chris van Wyk – who shared his concern about the dearth of access to reading material in his neighbourhood. Starting small, Turton gathered children to read and discuss books, and to write creatively, with the help of volunteer adults.

When he heard about the Phendulani Quiz, he approached founder Marj Brown, a high school teacher, and set to work establishing and growing a new round – which now involves 10 local schools. It has not been an easy road, and the challenges continue. This year, for instance, the books supplied by Brown for the teams to read were stolen from the Bosmont school where they were being stored. A few weeks later, the Bosmont Hall where the quiz was to be hosted was burnt down. Last year, a gang shootout nearby – on the day the quiz was to be held – prevented some of the children from taking part.

Phendulani Quiz is an NGO that collects and distributes selected children’s literature – mainly written by South African authors – to over 200 participating schools nationwide. Teams of six learners, from grades five to seven, then work together to answer age-relevant questions on the stories and characters.



Phendulani Quiz winners Tristen, Ariana and Chloe took first, second and third place in their class at the end of 2025

Despite the local challenges, the Bosmont Phendulani round is always lifted by a special magic and enthusiasm, commented Brown.

“On the day of the Phendulani Quiz, the Readers R Leaders participants escort the quizmistress into the area with banners, accompanied by drum majorettes – a proud show of support lending glamour to the event,” she said. “In between rounds, members of Readers are

Leaders read poems they have written, and make a tribute to the local author, Chis van Wyk, to remind the community of what resilience and determination can achieve.”

This year, the winning school in this round was Wilhelmina Hoskins, with a score of 80%, followed by Newclare Primary and Bree Primary with 75%, and Bosmont Primary coming fourth with 74%. Of the 14 teams who participated, the lowest score was 42%.

“What impresses me is the effort the schools are putting into preparing the learners for the quiz,” said Turton. “They are helped by a Readers R Leaders volunteer or a teacher – who makes a real difference as a reading champion. They discuss the books with the children once they have read them, and clarify any questions they may have.”

Brown secures annual donations of books from publishers and book dealers, and a sponsor who supports two of the Phendulani regions; on average, she sends twelve titles to each school in a region

“In each of the regions, it is very exciting to see the literacy scores gradually rise in each quiz from year to year,” she said. “But most of all, I love the excitement that the quiz generates among all the participants – as well as the audience!”

In Cape Town, this year’s winning team was Harmony Primary – which is also located in an area that is notorious as a ‘gangland’. The teachers and team members at Harmony Primary attested to the teamwork, love and bonding the quiz had achieved, while building personal pride and self-confidence.

Brown’s long-term vision is for provincial library services to adopt the quiz and use it in all schools as an added catalyst for reading among primary school children. The Gauteng library service uses the quiz in their Reading Clubs, covering 75-100 schools each year.

“The Phendulani Quiz is a quiet revolution which is touching the lives of children in places around SA that are plagued by poverty, illiteracy crime and regular gang violence,” she said. “It is so inspiring to witness how can transform children’s lives and futures, even under these challenging conditions.”

Mbombela Phendulani – 18 October

(Report by Ms PS Singwane, Mpumalanga Phendulani Co-ordinator)

Mbombela Circuit held this year's Phendulani Literacy Quiz on the 18th of October 2025 at Valencia Combined School in a glamorous, inspiring well -decorated School Hall. The themes for this year were: Tales of Silliness; Friends and Family; and Challenges.

As Mpumalanga Quiz Co-ordinators, we are grateful to the Principal of Valencia Combined School, Mr W White, who embraced this project and ensured that we had an exquisite venue which inspired the learners. He also extended a helping hand and ensured everyone was well hydrated by buying water for everyone and soft drinks for all coordinators and quiz officials.



Circuit Manager Mr Linkwati PM in the lovely school hall in Valencia

To Mr PM Linkwati, the Circuit Manager, and circuit officials Ms Sindi Lukhele and Ms Nobantu , thank you for supporting the project by communicating with participating schools, typing and printing of the programme and certificates and attending the event.

We also thank the Principals of all the participating schools for heeding the call and appointing coordinators at school level and for the provision of transport and food. Without the school

coordinators and participants, the quiz would be non -existent. Their contributions are highly appreciated.

Ms Singwane PS and Mr Singwane RM (who sponsored the quiz with three Trophies (Gold, Silver and Bronze and a box of Lunch Bars for on-the-spot prizes) ran the quiz with the assistance of Ms TR Mashaba (Ehlanzeni District Media advisor), Mr JF Mkasi (Sitintile Secondary School), Ms I Moila (Valencia Combined School Quiz Co- coordinator) and Mr J Mkhabela.

The quiz mistress was a young media personality, Ms Loyal Serutegi Ratau who works for Ligwalagwala FM. Mr Junior Munguambe, former 2024 Mr Teen Mbombela and currently 2025 Mr Teen Mpumalanga served as a programme director and he did it professionally – as though he was an international programme director! When there were challenges, he would ask the learners to perform an item (dancing, singing and poetry) and reward them.

The occasion was also graced by 2025 Ms Mbombela Teen finalist Noncedo. The 2024 Ms Teen Universe finalist Siyanda Nkambule and Mr Mkasi served as Quiz Markers with two learners from Sitintile Secondary School and one learner from Cyril Clarke. Ms TR Mashaba and Ms PS Singwane served as moderators. Mr RM Singwane was the official photographer. Ms Sindi Lukhele and Ms Nobantu typed and

printed certificates and also helped with photography. Ms Moila I was the overseer as our hostess. Mr Mkhabela J ensured that at the end of the event, all desks were re-arranged and the venue be ready for the next activity – National Senior Certificate Final Examinations.



2025 Mbombela Quiz officials and organisers

Participating schools

In 2025, participating schools included: Boschrand, Thekwane South, Entabamhlophe, Nellsville, Valencia Combined and John Mdluli Primary Schools. These are all feeder schools to Mbombela Secondary Schools.

As Mbombela Circuit, we are hopeful that more primary schools will participate in the quiz in the coming years. There was great improvement in the scores compared to 2024. The participants were very excited as they were listening and responding to the questions that were

being asked. They were really enjoying the quiz as each team member collaborated after a question was being posed. There was great team work!

The 2025 winning team was from Thekwane South, with second place going to Valencia Combined School and third place to John Mdluli Primary School.



2025 Phendulani Quiz winners Thekwane South Primary School



In second position was Valencia Combined School



2025 Third Position John Mdluli Primary School



Boschrand Primary School



Entabamhlope Primary School



2025 Participants Nellsville Combined School

Johannesburg Phendulani – 25 September 2025

(Report by Nicky Sulter, Johannesburg regional coordinator)

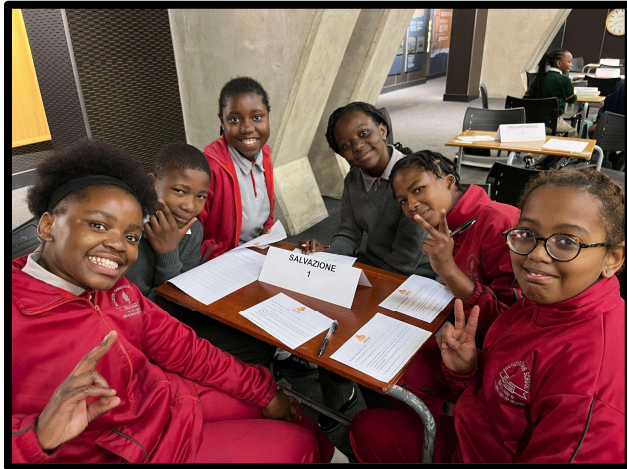
The much-anticipated Johannesburg round of the annual Phendulani Quiz took place on September 25th, bringing together a fabulous gathering of over 120 enthusiastic readers from ten participating schools. Held at St John's College, the event saw teams from diverse areas, ranging from nearby Yeoville and Hillbrow to as far as Orange Farm and North Riding, compete in a test of literary knowledge.



The participants were quizzed on ten set books across four themed rounds, including 'Relationships' and 'Challenges,' with bonus questions incorporated between rounds. The competition was fierce, with incredibly close final scores. *Salvazione 1* emerged victorious, claiming the overall title, followed by *Impala Crescent 1* in second place and *Vuleka Rosebank 1* in third. Congratulations are extended to all readers for their dedication and consistent reading.

A highlight of the event was the presence of guest speaker Mr Cyril Turton, the founder of 'Readers are Leaders'. This not-for-profit organisation works in under-resourced areas, such as Westbury and Riverlea, to encourage reading through book distribution and school book clubs. Mr Turton, author of 'Cyril Learns to Read,' shared his personal journey and the life-changing impact of reading, further inspiring the young competitors.

Thanks go to St John's College for hosting the occasion, all the teachers and mentors who facilitated the children's reading, and to the enormous work done by Marj Brown for coordinating the quiz, which included sourcing and distributing the books and devising most of the questions.



Johannesburg Phendulani winners Salvazione 1



Second place went to Impala Crescent 1



Vuleka 1 took third place in the Johannesburg round

Pretoria/Johannesburg North Phendulani – 6 October 2025

(Report by Radhika Singh, regional coordinator)



Figure 1 The vibrant and energetic Nomfundo Dladla, our English teacher, served as the quiz mistress.

Beaulieu Preparatory School is dedicated to fostering a reading culture in six underprivileged schools: Modern Primary, MC Wieler Primary, Olivenhoutbosch, Nooitgedacht, Noordwyk Primary and Nokuphila Primary School. This year, students were inspired to read a total of fourteen books across various genres, including School Matters, Family, Challenges and Women. The books were generously provided by our school, publishers and donors. The annual Phendulani quiz not only enables students to showcase their passion for reading but also strengthens connections with local communities.

The children displayed diverse preferences for the books, with certain genres such as school, family, and challenges standing out as favourites based on their scores and votes. Their visit to the school was filled with excitement as they explored the facilities and took numerous photographs, while the food offered was a delightful treat for both students and their accompanying teachers.

The Phendulani quiz was organised with the help of Beaulieu Prep, our wonderful support staff, and my incredible team of Grade Seven Quiz team members and enthusiastic Book Club participants. I coordinated the organization and communication aspects, with books donated by our publishers and Beaulieu Prep, ensuring that each school received a box of books.

Nokuphila Primary 1 emerged as the winning school, followed by Nokuphila 2 in second place, and Nooitgedacht Primary 1 secured third place. Prizes and certificates were awarded to the winners and all participants, who also enjoyed the accompanying singing and dancing during the event.



There were audience questions that challenged both the students and guests. The winners were pleasantly surprised with their sweet treats. The joy and enthusiasm exhibited by the young learners motivate us to strive for excellence in supporting their reading literacy journey.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to our generous stakeholders for their invaluable resources, support, and encouragement.



Nokuphila 1 in first place



Nokuphila 2 in second place



Nooitgedacht Primary 1 secured third place

Gqeberha Phendulani – 29 July 2025

(Article by Catherine Richards, published in the Herald, as shared by regional coordinator Michéle Kerley)

Arcadia Primary bright sparks crowned Phendulani Literary Quiz winners

Arcadia Primary School has proved it has what it takes — its pupils have won the 14th Phendulani Literary Quiz held at Grey Junior School.



Phendulani Literary Quiz winners from Arcadia Primary: (from left) Obuthsha Mabengu (13), Tamara Cox (13), Leona van-Ross (12), Grey Junior headmaster Grant Butler, Cindy Marais (12), Tatyana Campbell (13), and Shekinah Adams (13). Photo by Eugene Coetzee

Arcadia Primary School has proved it has what it takes — its pupils have won the 14th Phendulani Literary Quiz held at Grey Junior School.

The other primary schools that took part in the quiz on Tuesday were Heatherbank, John Masiza, Sancto, Triomf, Boet Jeggels and Thornhill. The 48 participants taking part in 2025 were divided into eight teams, made up of six pupils each. Defending champions Boet Jeggels came third, and Heatherbank were second.

The aim of Phendulani is to promote reading and comprehension in a fun way, while also making sure that books which have been donated are read. The entertaining quiz is thoroughly enjoyed by all, as attested to in the feedback forms which the children complete each year.

Many SA schools with well-stocked libraries have taken part in the international Kids' Lit Quiz for more than a decade, with Nelson Mandela Bay schools having participated since 2006.

It was felt that an outreach quiz along similar lines should be extended to schools which did not have libraries of their own, and so Phendulani was born.

In March, a set of 12 books was provided to each of the participating schools. The books are sourced by Marj Brown, the mastermind of the quiz, and a school librarian.

Each school enters up to two teams of six grade 6 or 7 pupils, who are required to read as many of these books as possible.

The quiz has four rounds of questions, with each round consisting of 10 questions. Each team works on the questions together, writing down the answers, which are then marked.

The Eastern Cape region's quiz is a collaborative effort, co-ordinated by Grey Junior School librarian Michéle Kerley.

The school librarians from St George's, Grey, Collegiate, Clarendon, Kabega and Woodridge, as well as the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipal Library Services, support the schools taking part by providing transport to the quiz, lunch packs for the children, and prizes for the winners, as well as making sure every participant goes home with a book of their own.

Grey Junior headmaster Grant Butler was the quiz master.

The top three winning schools walked away with prizes from Woolworths Beauty, Varsity College, Shackleton Risk Insurance and Amobia Communications.

Makhanda Phendulani Literacy Quiz – 17 September 2025

(Report by Cathy Gush, Projects Manager: Lebone Centre)

The Phendulani Literacy Quiz was held in Makhanda on Wednesday 17 September 2025, as part of the celebration of Literacy Month.



Kingswood Junior School once again played gracious hosts to the event in their school hall, and also sponsored lunch packs for the participants and refreshments for the teachers. Our thanks to the principal, Mrs Carissa Wilson, for her support and for doing duty as one of the markers. In addition, the DSG Junior School also once again sponsored little gift packs of stationery and sweets for all the participants.

Five schools participated (all no-fee paying or low-fee paying schools with limited resources), each with a team of 6 members. The schools were: George Dickerson Primary; Seventh Day Adventist Primary; Good Shepherd Primary; Ntaba Maria Primary; and St Mary's Primary.

The winner this year was the team from the Seventh Day Adventist Primary School, with George Dickerson in second place and Good Shepherd in third place.

Beautiful collections of book prizes, sourced from the local Bargain Books store, served as prizes for the podium teams as well as those who won "spot" prizes in-between for the bonus questions. We are very grateful to the sponsors who made this possible.

The quiz was once again a great success, and the following words from Mr Walter Mapfumo from SDA Primary (the winners) bear a beautiful testimony to this.

"Once again I would like to extend my gratitude for the opportunity given to our school to participate in the Phendulani Literacy Quiz in 2025," says Walter. "The extent to which it has stimulated the love of reading in our learners is quite profound.

“We also face the pandemic of learners failing to read for meaning. The books and the opportunity to participate in the Quiz have created a culture of independent reading in the school and we are grateful.



This year, I spent less time on preparation for the quiz with the learners than I would have liked, but the growing enthusiasm for reading amongst our learners now has taken on a life of its own. I felt that it would be an injustice to keep quiet when the fruits of the programme are so visible.”

An article about the Phendulani Quiz also appeared in the local Grocott’s Mail, who sent a reporter to cover the event.

The Evaluation Forms that the participants filled in were very interesting, in that they provided a wide variety in both the “Favourite” category and the “What I struggled with” category, and some titles appeared in both!

Hector pipped Sharp,Sharp Thoko! and Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth by one vote, but was also voted by five learners as the book they struggled with most.

However, in the “struggled with” category, the most votes (9) were given to Peanut Jones and the Seven Portals.

In the Suggestions category, quite a few asked for more bonus questions, some thought the questions were too hard, and there were quite a few comments around food (they wanted more, or at least a snacks and drinks break along with the lunch packs given at the beginning).





A wonderful opportunity once again to expose Intermediate Phase learners to good literature and inspire them to read. We look forward to next year and an even better quiz!

Thank you, Marj and the sponsors!!

Knysna Phendulani – 8 September 2025

(Report by Julie Stevenson, Regional Coordinator)

Oakhill School was delighted to host the Phendulani Quiz, a wonderful opportunity for our students to connect, socialise, and have fun with peers from Concordia, Hornlee, Fraaisig, Chris Nissen, Thembelitsha, and Sunridge schools before the quiz began.

The afternoon was filled with laughter and energy as students enjoyed activities such as marimbas, hand tennis, soccer, volleyball, chess, and guided tours of our beautiful campus.

After the activities, everyone gathered in the hall for the main event—the quiz itself. Each participating school had earlier received a set of ten books, forming the basis for the challenging and engaging questions.

We are proud to congratulate our winners: **Chris Nissen** in first place, **Thembelitsha** in second, and **Concordia** in third—narrowly ahead of **Sunridge**. Well done to all participants for their enthusiasm, teamwork, and impressive knowledge!





Margate Phendulani – 16 October 2025

(Report by Meg Dixon, regional coordinator)

The Margate round of the Phendulani Quiz was held at CfC Ministries on The Bushy Vales Road between Margate and Port Edward. This venue is a Bible School, Retreat Centre and Campground for churches, youth groups and other Christian activities.



Eight rural schools entered the quiz this year and, as always, it was a great morning for learners and teachers. The enthusiasm from the learners is infectious and – while they all have fun – it is an opportunity for a different sort of learning.

Local celebrity Barbie Meyer gave an inspiring presentation, which the learners thoroughly enjoyed.

In their evaluation, the participants' favourite book was *Two-Faced Friends* by Dorothy Dyer (12 votes), followed by Angie Thomas's *Nic Blake and the Remarkables* (10), *Madcap* by Jaco Jacobs (7) and *Luntu Masiza Tells the Truth* by Penny Lorimer (3).

No surprise, then, that they asked for more books by Jaco Jacobs, Dorothy Dyer and Angie Thomas. Overall, most of the children said the quiz was "perfect" – making suggestions like: "Give us more books to read!"; "More rounds of questions"; and "Asking more schools."

There was a good spread of categories when the participants listed their favourite kinds of books, including adventure (9), school & family (7), teens (7) and horror (7).



Durban Phendulani – 25 November 2025

The Phendulani Literacy Quiz was a great success with 16 teams participating from eight schools entered. Each team had six participants with an option of two reserves, and teams were supported by librarians and mentors.

The learners were well prepared – as reflected in the great scores and it was encouraging to see how well they knew and enjoyed the books.

Grateful thanks to Phendulani organiser, Marj Brown, for the set books and quiz questions, to The Rock Church for hosting the event and to the AES Charitable Trust for the snacks, lunch and cool drinks as well as certificates and book prizes for the top eight teams.

The quiz mistress was LEARN founder, Ros Toerien, assisted by LEARN ambassador, Wiseman Njike and markers, Lungile Blose and Nonceba Zulu.





Bloemfontein pilot Phendulani Quiz – 5 September 2025

(Report by Marj Brown)

In September, I met an utterly delightful woman, Khahliso Rananai, who invited me to run a pilot of the Phendulani Quiz in Bloemfontein – which was held at Gonyane Primary School. I am used to every Phendulani Quiz taking a local flavour, and this was no exception. Ms Bloemfontein Queen, Mbali, attended and gave a great speech in support of books and reading. Thanks again to Khahliso for her organisation and invitation.



Gonyane Primary School hosted a pilot Phendulani Quiz in Bloemfontein

