



Annual Report 2025

MASIKHULE KUNYE-
GROWING TOGETHER


E D U C A T I O N





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OUR PURPOSE AND REACH

Our mission is to raise student achievement in rural South African communities.

We choose to work at three different, but connected levels: student, school and system. Our student-focused programmes have a direct and immediate impact on student learning, while our school and systems work is often longer term and involves working with and through others, but is equally important if we want to raise achievement levels for all rural learners.



How do we know if we're succeeding?

As an organisation we use these **7 questions** to measure our success, with answers carefully supported by data - essentially our yardstick for whether we're succeeding or not.

1. Are we growing the number of students we serve?
2. Are our students on track for success in earlier grades?
3. Are our students completing school?
4. Are our students leaving school with purpose, agency and options?
5. Are our alumni accessing further study or meaningful work?
6. Are we building an effective talent pipeline?
7. Are we building a sustainable operating model?

Mapping our impact



Axium Mnqanduli Site

Axium Zithulele Site

COFFEE BAY

HOLE IN THE WALL

- 38 schools continuing from 2024
- 17 new schools joined in 2025

Axium Amajingqi Site



8 000

Learners across our programmes

IN 2025, WE REACHED MORE THAN 8 000 LEARNERS ACROSS OUR PROGRAMMES AND EXPANDED OUR FOOTPRINT FROM 41 TO 55 SCHOOLS ACROSS THE RURAL EASTERN CAPE. NOBALISA GREW TO 49 SCHOOLS, WHILE MAQANYENI PRIMARY SCHOOL AND TWALI-KULU PRIMARY SCHOOL JOINED OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS NETWORK, GROWING THE PSP COHORT TO 13 SCHOOLS.

Message from the Executive Director

Looking back, 2025 feels both like the culmination of five years of careful growth and a bridge into a new chapter for Axiom.

We added two schools to our Public School Partnerships network, bringing the total to 13, and 12 schools to Nobalisa, bringing its total to 49. Together, our programmes reached more than 8,000 rural learners across two education districts, more than double the number we reached in 2021.

“TOGETHER, OUR PROGRAMMES REACHED MORE THAN 8,000 RURAL LEARNERS ACROSS TWO EDUCATION DISTRICTS, MORE THAN DOUBLE THE NUMBER WE REACHED IN 2021.”

Reaching more learners matters, but we have always known that growth can come at a cost, whether to programme quality, organisational culture or staff wellbeing. Our results remain strong, even if they are not yet as consistent as we would like. The Grade 12 pass rate at both PSP high

schools has stabilised and remains well above pre-partnership levels. Grade 3 learners in our AmaJingqi PSP schools are reading at three times comparative national levels, while children who have participated in Nobalisa for three or more years read at more than twice those levels. Progress has been slower in Grades 6 and 9, but our Teaching at the Right Level pilots are beginning to show signs of closing foundational gaps in English and mathematics.

This commitment to quality also meant taking a more rigorous look at our work. In 2025, we made our most intentional investment yet in strengthening the evidence behind Nobalisa. Independent research and a detailed programme review are helping us understand what is working, what needs to improve and how the programme might contribute beyond the schools Axiom serves directly.

These questions came at an important point in Axiom's journey. Having completed one long-term growth plan, we began looking towards our next strategic phase to 2030. We remain deeply rooted in rural communities, but we are also thinking more carefully about how our experience can support government to strengthen education at a much larger scale. We have started asking what it would mean for Axiom to become a “small giant”: not necessarily operating at scale ourselves, but influencing at scale.

That shift is also shaped by the realities of the funding environment. Like any nonprofit, we remain vulnerable to changes in local and international funding. The dismantling of USAID indirectly affected South Africa's education sector, while much of the funding that remains is increasingly directed towards large-scale, government-linked work delivered at a low cost per learner.

Against this backdrop, we entered a difficult restructuring process towards the end of the year, resulting in the retrenchment of a third of our staff. After 16 years of steady growth, this was a painful period for the entire organisation, particularly because employment opportunities for young people in rural communities remain so limited. What carried us through was the conviction that a leaner, more sustainable Axiom would ultimately be better positioned to make a lasting contribution.

Through the progress, difficult decisions and uncertainty of 2025, our vision remained constant: every rural learner leaving school with purpose, agency and options.

Craig Paxton
Executive Director

Message from the Chief Operations Officer

Growing together means ensuring that Axiom's systems, infrastructure and leadership can keep pace with the organisation's work.

In 2025, our operational focus was on ensuring that Axiom's infrastructure, transport and leadership could support a growing organisation. We strengthened our office spaces and staff accommodation and supported maintenance and infrastructure work at our Public School Partnership schools. We also opened a satellite office on Mqanduli Road, bringing operational support closer to schools located far from our main site.

Transport remained one of our largest operational demands. We strengthened our vehicle fleet by purchasing three new vehicles and appointing additional

"TRANSPORT REMAINED ONE OF OUR LARGEST OPERATIONAL DEMANDS. WE STRENGTHENED OUR VEHICLE FLEET BY PURCHASING THREE NEW VEHICLES AND APPOINTING ADDITIONAL DRIVERS. THIS GAVE STAFF MORE TIME TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND LEARNERS AND LESS TIME WORKING AROUND TRANSPORT LIMITATIONS."

coordination between HR and Finance also strengthened payroll preparation.

Alongside this, we continued building leadership from within Axiom through our Emerging Leaders programmes and other training led by Central Education. With stronger leadership at site level, we clarified how operational decisions should be made. Site leaders were given greater responsibility for day-to-day decisions,

drivers. This gave staff more time to support schools and learners and less time working around transport limitations.

The pace of recruitment at the beginning of the year also tested our systems. More than 100 new staff members, mainly youth facilitators, joined Axiom during the first quarter alone. HR managed their recruitment and onboarding while filling several other key positions. Closer

while the central office continued overseeing procurement, transport, infrastructure and matters carrying wider financial or reputational risk. This allowed sites to respond more quickly while maintaining consistent standards across Axiom.

Supporting staff and programmes across widely dispersed rural communities continued to place pressure on our vehicles, buildings and maintenance capacity. Towards the end of the year, funding pressures led to restructuring across Axiom. We reduced costs, redistributed responsibilities and adjusted roles while keeping essential services running and retaining as much of the organisation's experience and capacity as possible.

In 2026, our focus will be on building a leaner, more sustainable organisation. We will test different ways of working with government and public employment initiatives and strengthen the systems needed to recruit, train and support young people at scale. We will also continue improving the infrastructure, transport and operational systems that allow our programmes to function reliably across rural schools. As new operational demands emerge, our responsibility is to ensure that these systems remain dependable, sustainable and responsive to the people we serve.

Sithembele Zondeka
Chief Operations Officer

Message from our Head of Education

Growing together in education means learners learning, leaders growing, and the systems around them growing too.

In 2025, our Education team focused on strengthening the systems behind effective classroom practice. We conducted a mixed-method study into the relationship between coaching and learner outcomes, while adapting our training and coaching design for both permanent Axiom staff and young people employed through public employment programmes.

This work required us to look closely at what happens between training and implementation. We developed and piloted new tools and systems to monitor classroom practice and the support provided to staff. The evidence showed that leaders were not able to coach as frequently as needed to bring about consistent changes in practice. It was a difficult finding, but also an important one. Evidence is never simply "good" or "bad." It helps us see where our assumptions do not match

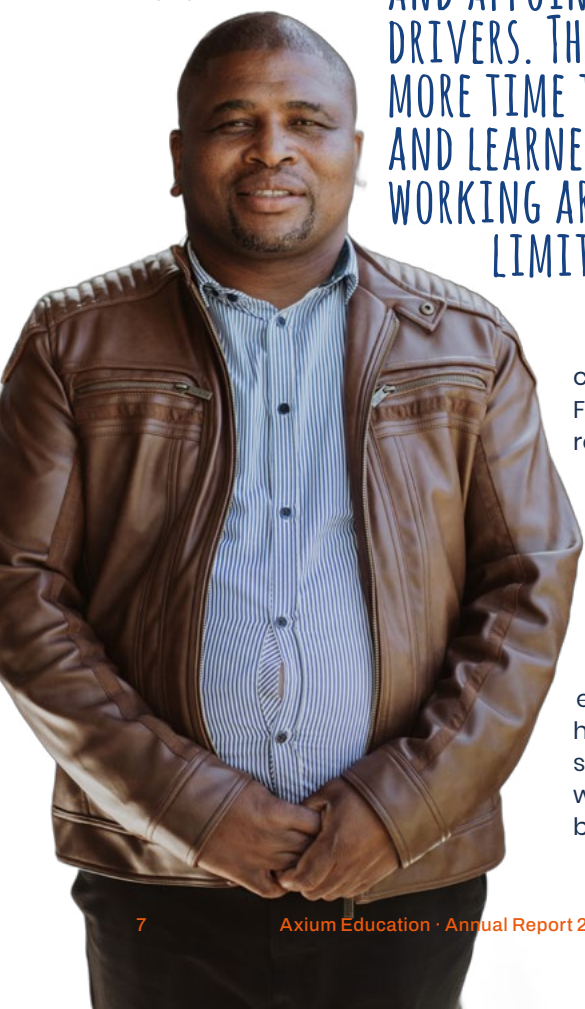
reality and where our systems need to change. In response, we clarified coaching responsibilities, reviewed the tools used to support classroom practice and adapted our training strategies for staff entering or transitioning into new roles.

We also continued investing in the young leaders who form the backbone of Axiom. Two Emerging Leaders cohorts supported new and aspiring leaders to build the confidence and skills needed to guide teams, while several coaching bootcamps helped staff prepare for new responsibilities.

We do not know exactly what the future holds for Axiom's projects, but we know what is growing here is good. Our staff, many of them raised in the same rural communities they now serve, continue to teach, support and educate the children of the Eastern Cape, and they keep finding better and stronger ways to do it. Masikhule kunye.

Joanna Reynolds
Head of Education

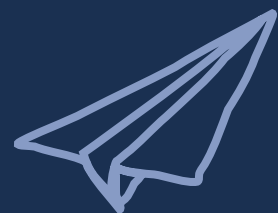
"WE DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR AXIUM'S PROJECTS, BUT WE KNOW WHAT IS GROWING HERE IS GOOD. OUR STAFF, MANY OF THEM RAISED IN THE SAME RURAL COMMUNITIES THEY NOW SERVE, CONTINUE TO TEACH, SUPPORT AND EDUCATE THE CHILDREN OF THE EASTERN CAPE, AND THEY KEEP FINDING BETTER AND STRONGER WAYS"



Our core values

What it took to grow together

HOW OUR EIGHT VALUES INFLUENCED DECISIONS AND DELIVERY IN 2025



1. STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

This year, we stopped assuming our model works and started testing it. Our pilot study with Stellenbosch University's RESEP unit, and our involvement in the Global Schools Forum's Labs at Scale, pushed us to hold Nobalisa up to independent scrutiny rather than rely only on our own assessment.



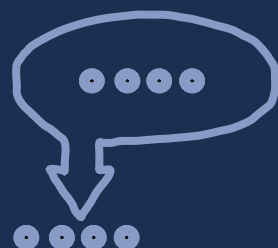
2. NEVER STOP LEARNING

We found that our leaders were not able to coach as often as needed, and TaRL results were lower than expected. Rather than soften that finding, we treated it as feedback and redesigned our coaching and training systems in the second half of the year.



3. UNDERSTAND FIRST

Pathways tracked more than 250 learners to find exactly where their post-school journeys were getting stuck, whether that was choosing a course, applying, or securing registration, accommodation or funding. Support was then aimed at that specific barrier.



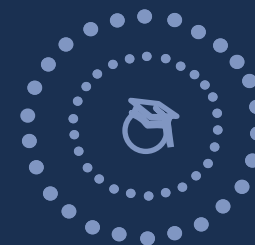
4. DO WHAT WE SAY

In 2021, we committed to reaching more than 10,000 rural learners by the end of 2025. More than 8000 learners were reached across our programmes.



5. MASAMBENI

In PSP, Coaching Champions, principals, department heads and teachers now give one another direct feedback. This moved coaching from something Axiom delivers to schools towards something schools lead and sustain themselves.



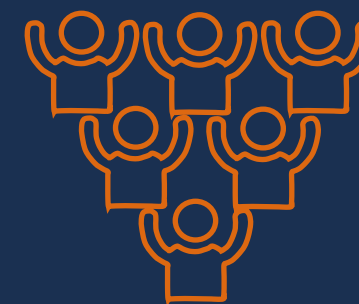
6. CHILD-CENTRED

Axiom exists to ensure that every rural learner leaves school with purpose, agency and options. This showed up clearly in Masakhane, our after-school programme, where learners increasingly helped shape their own sessions. They requested specific topics, asked facilitators to repeat activities they enjoyed, and some even attended on days they weren't scheduled to.



7. MOTIVATED MOTIVATORS

For many of our 86 new Nobalisa facilitators, this was their first formal job. Nearly half of them now see teaching as a future career.



8. SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The hardest decision of the year, reducing our staff complement and consolidating our directly managed schools, was made to create a leaner, more sustainable Axiom that could serve rural learners for longer.



Meet the team

From 2 in 2009 to 350+ in 2025





Public School Partnerships

PSPs are built on the belief that schools do best when they grow together, with one another, their communities and a non-profit partner like Axiom.

Public School Partnerships are Axiom's long-term partnerships with government schools. Over several years, we work closely with school leaders and staff to strengthen teaching, leadership and school culture. Our PSP network grew to 13 schools in 2025 with the addition of Maqanyeni Primary School and Twalikulu Primary School.

At the same time, our AmaJingqi schools began preparing for a new phase after seven years of intensive support. Moving some schools to a lighter-touch model means our team will be less involved in their day-to-day work while maintaining the relationships and progress built over time. It also creates space for us to focus intensive support where it can have the greatest effect and explore opportunities in other rural regions.

The strongest growth this year was in leadership and school culture. A new school walk tool gave principals and the Axiom PSP team a structured way to visit classrooms together, observe teaching and learning, and record what they saw. Nine of our 13 principals now participate in these walks regularly. Seeing the same classrooms and discussing the same evidence has strengthened school-wide accountability, contributing to partner schools that are safer, more orderly and more focused on the activities that support learning.

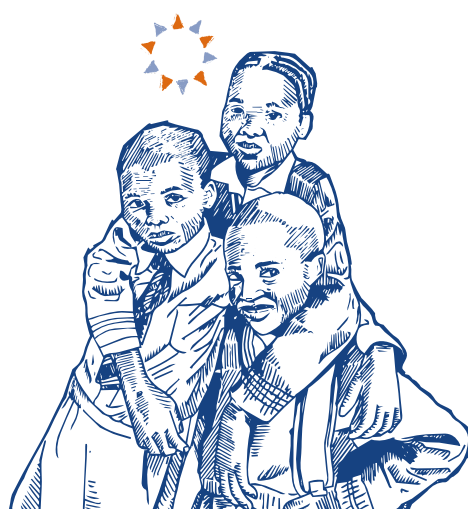
The AmaJingqi transition is a good example of Masikhule Kunye in action. The team worked carefully to ensure that decisions were fair, evidence-based and followed a clear process. School Support Team meetings were held at the end of each quarter and attended by the full site leadership team. Using school-level evidence and data, these meetings identified which schools were ready for lighter support and which still required Axiom's full-service model.

"IN 2025, 53 OF THESE SCHOOL-BASED LEADERS WERE TRAINED AND COACHED TO PROVIDE REAL-TIME FEED-BACK TO THEIR PEERS."

Our coaching approach is also becoming more school-owned. Rather than relying only on external coaches, we identify and train Coaching Champions from among principals,

departmental heads, teachers and other School Management Team members. In 2025, 53 of these school-based leaders were trained and coached to provide real-time feedback to their peers. Building this capacity within schools makes improvement less dependent on Axiom's daily presence. The experience also surfaced an important challenge: some school leaders, particularly in Willowvale, were less willing to participate in coaching themselves.

In 2026, Hlabizulu Primary, Ntlahlane Primary, Dumalisile Comprehensive High and Ngadla Primary will move to the lighter-touch model. Mgxabakazi Primary, Dumalisile Primary, Jongikwezi



We are also beginning a new assessment partnership with the Amathole East District. Our Foundation Phase Coach is working with the district's Senior Education Specialist to co-create the Grade 3 isiXhosa Collaborative School Assessment papers for June 2026. Over time, we hope to extend this work to assessments across key subjects, supporting closer alignment with the standards and level of rigour expected by the national curriculum.

Jacob Chirumanzi
Head of Schools





GRR-3

Nobalisa: Early Grade Literacy

Growing together through Nobalisa means strengthening children's foundations while creating opportunities for young people to learn, lead and serve their communities.

Nobalisa is our flagship foundational literacy programme. In 2025, we reached more than 8,000 children across 49 rural schools, more than double the number we reached in 2021. To support this growth, 86 new facilitators joined our team, while 10 facilitators and 3 mentors were promoted into leadership roles. All 13 began their Axiom journeys as facilitators. This internal progression strengthens literacy support in schools while creating employment and development opportunities for young people from the same communities as the children they serve.

locations, and 12 of our schools were situated more than 50 kilometres from our main site. We opened a satellite office on Mqanduli Road to bring support closer, giving teams more time with facilitators, teachers and learners, and less time on the road.

Through our partnerships with The Learning Trust and Small Projects Foundation, 150 facilitators received stipends through the Social Employment Fund in 2025. Together with Nalibali and The Learning Trust, we are working towards extending this support to all the facilitators in the programme,

which now includes more than 300 young people. The stipends provide an income and workplace experience while helping us retain trained facilitators and give learners more consistent support.

In 2024, we started asking ourselves a harder question: is the Nobalisa programme really working in the way we think it is? Answering it required a year of careful preparation and trust-building with principals,

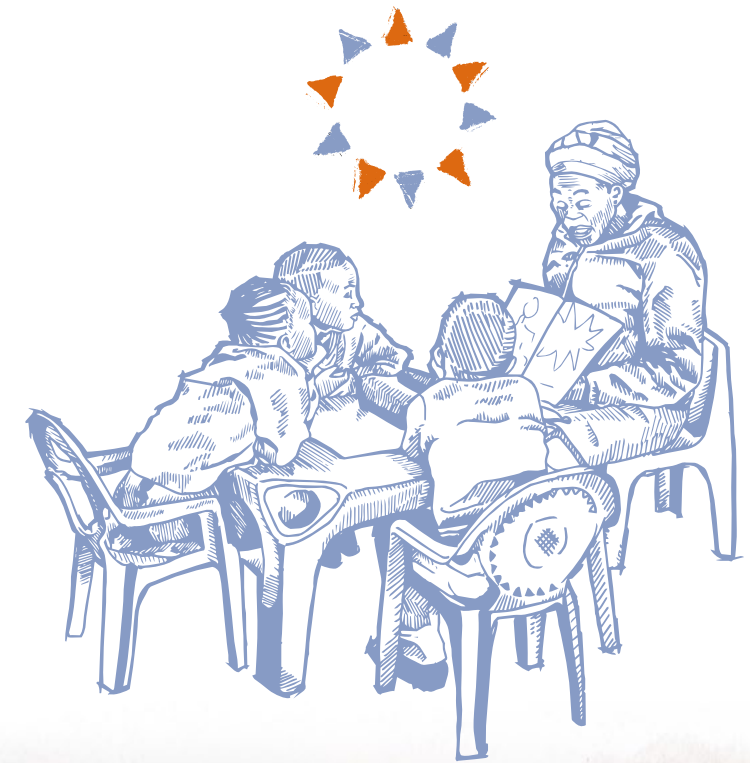
School Management Teams and communities, particularly at the schools that would form part of the control group and not receive the intervention immediately.

In 2025, our pilot study with Stellenbosch University's Policy unit Research on Socioeconomic began across 31 schools. Seventeen schools received the intervention, while 14 formed the control group. Comparing literacy outcomes between the two groups is helping us assess the programme more rigorously and identify what needs to be strengthened. Our involvement in the Global Schools Forum's Labs

at Scale is also helping us build a stronger, independent evidence base for Nobalisa's design and impact.

Looking ahead, we are reconsidering what growth should mean for the programme. In 2026, we will focus on a smaller, more stable group of schools under our direct management and introduce numeracy alongside literacy for the first time. We also want to share the model with government and other organisations that can take it further than we could alone. We believe the Basic Education Employment Initiative could provide an important route for doing this. The next phase of Nobalisa's growth will be measured not only by how many schools we reach ourselves, but by how well we strengthen the model, share what we have learned and support others to implement it.

Babalwa Matikinca
Nobalisa Growth
& Logistics Manager



I HAVE A GRANDCHILD WHO IS NOW IN GRADE 4 AND WHAT I HAVE NOTICED IS THAT HER READING SKILLS HAVE IMPROVED, SHE IS READING FLUENTLY, EVEN WHEN THEY PLAY AFTER SCHOOL YOU WOULD HEAR THEM SINGING PLAYING ALL THE GAMES THAT THEY WERE TAUGHT BY NOBALISA

Mrs Nani, Macosa PS

Pamela Mdlandla, one of our Site Leaders based at Hole in the Wall, shared what this work looks like on the ground:

I always say that a rural child has the same potential as any urban or township child. We just need to be patient with them. The teachers were warm, but honest too, about the big classes, the learners who struggled to show up, and roads that flooded so badly on rainy days that some children couldn't cross the bridge to get to school.

Despite these challenges, the team kept showing up. Nobalisa facilitators ran reading clubs after school, and teachers began noticing the difference. One Grade 3 teacher at Coffee Bay Primary shared that her class had come first in the spelling bee for the first time in the school's history.

The roads Pamela describes reflect a wider challenge we faced during the year. Nobalisa expanded into six new rural



Our programmes

Alongside Nobalisa and our Public School Partnerships, four connected programs support learners at different stages of their education. Masakhane strengthens English and Mathematics foundations in Grades 4-7, while Yenzokuhle helps learners in Grades 4-9 close gaps in Mathematics. Ekukhuleni provides additional support in Mathematics, Physical Sciences and English to learners in Grades 10-12, and Pathways helps young people in Grades 7-12 navigate their options beyond school. Each responds to a different point in the learner's journey, but all share the same purpose: helping rural learners grow in confidence, strengthen their skills and move towards futures with greater purpose, agency and choice. Here is a snapshot of what we built together in 2025.

Masakhane

Growing together through Masakhane means creating a place where learners can strengthen their foundations, build confidence and rediscover the joy of learning.

Masakhane means "let us build one another," and in 2025, we saw this come to life as learners became increasingly invested in their own learning. We introduced English Teaching at the Right Level during the school day, building on what we had learned through our after-school programme. This approach allowed us to support learners according to their reading ability rather than their grade. By Term 2, every learner assessed had moved beyond the beginner reading level. 41 could read a short story, while 18 could read stories with greater fluency and understanding.

Learning at Masakhane also extended beyond formal lessons through the library and computer lab, giving children access to books, play and digital learning opportunities. The toy library, launched in February, quickly became a valued community space with 49 regular participants, including children with limited access to toys and learning materials at home.

We also saw stronger learner engagement, with Grade 7 attendance improving after we introduced attendance badges.

"IN 2026, WE WILL CONTINUE BRINGING TOGETHER TARGETED INSTRUCTION, LEARNING THROUGH PLAY AND ACCESS TO THE LIBRARY AND COMPUTER LAB TO CREATE A RICHER AFTER-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE".

Ayanda Parafini
Masakhane Program
Coordinator





GR 4-9

Yenzokuhle

Growing together through Yenzokuhle means helping learners see that Mathematics is something they can understand, one sum at a time.

Yenzokuhle means “do it well” and gives learners the time and support to strengthen their foundational Mathematics skills. In 2025, we reached 1,469 learners across 12 schools, including new partner schools Maqanyeni and Twalikulu. “At the beginning of the year, only 19 learners had mastered addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. By the end of Term 1, that number had increased to 123” – Zukile Luzipho, Yenzokuhle Program Coordinator. This meant that learners who had previously struggled with basic calculations were ready to move on to fractions and more independent learning.

We developed and piloted a new fractions module, while quarterly meetings with teachers gave us an opportunity to review learner results and decide what support was needed next. The gains were not even across all grades. Older learners, particularly those in Grades 8 and 9, often carried deeper learning gaps and were harder to re-engage. In 2026, we will focus on helping these learners rebuild their motivation while supporting all learners to move from foundational skills towards the Mathematics expected at their grade level.

“AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, ONLY 19 LEARNERS HAD MASTERED ADDITION, SUBTRACTION, MULTIPLICATION AND DIVISION. BY THE END OF TERM 1, THAT NUMBER HAD INCREASED TO 123”

Zukile Luzipho
Yenzokuhle Program
Coordinator



GR 10-12

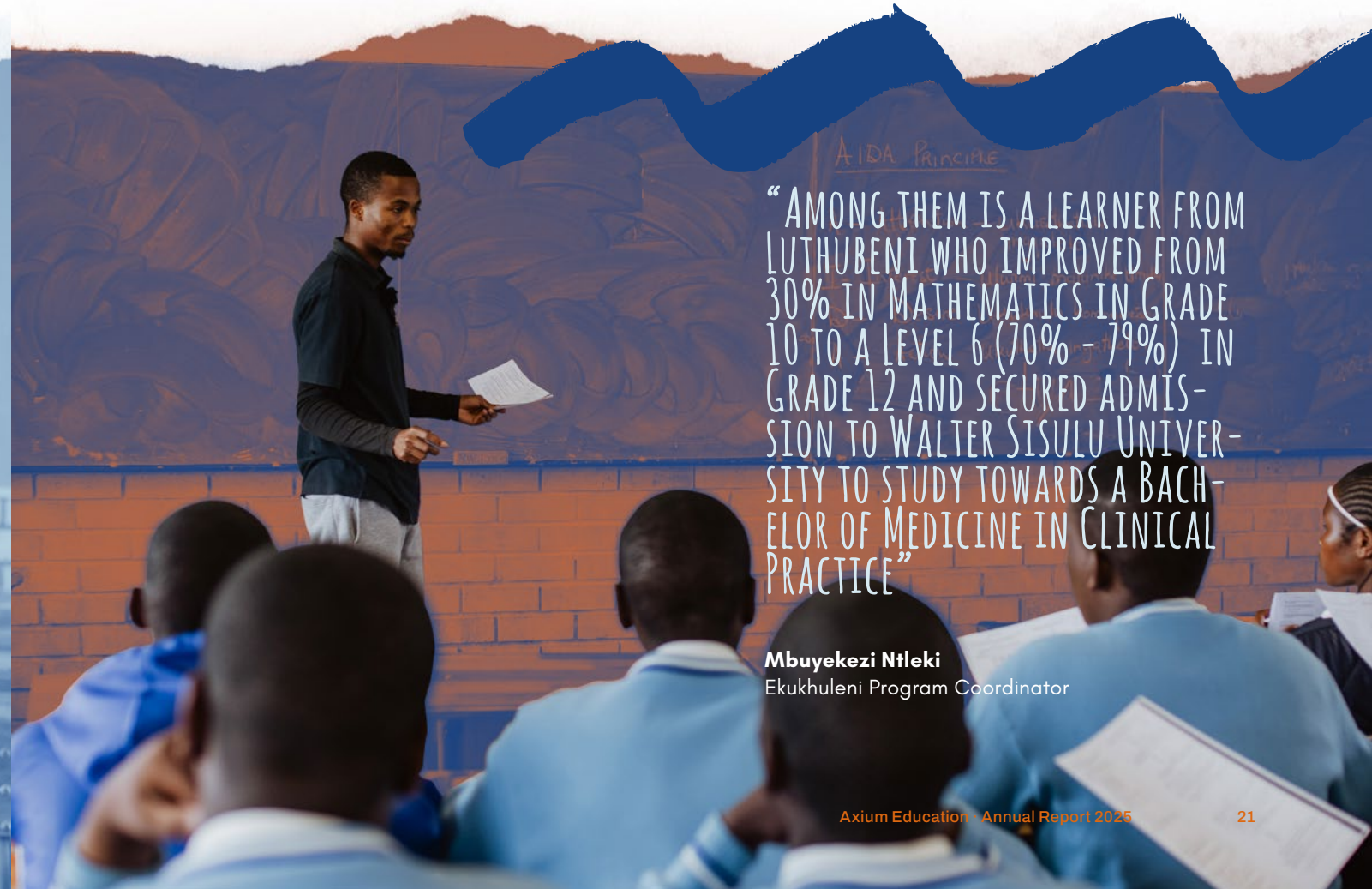
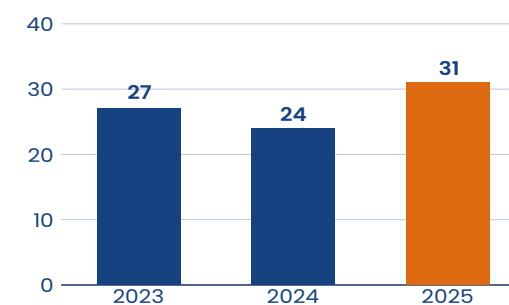
Ekukhuleni

Growing together through Ekukhuleni means walking alongside learners as they strengthen their results and begin shaping their futures beyond school.

Ekukhuleni means “growing up,” reflecting the important stage at which learners begin making decisions about life beyond school. The programme brings together learners from six rural high schools for structured after-school and Saturday classes in Mathematics, Physical Sciences and English. The Class of 2025 achieved a 98% pass rate, with 48 of the 49 learners passing matric. 31 achieved Bachelor passes, 15 achieved Diploma passes, and two achieved Higher Certificate passes.

For us, these results matter most when they lead to meaningful next steps. Twenty learners are now studying at university, 10 are at college and three are repeating matric to improve their marks and strengthen their chances of entering their preferred courses. The remaining learners are employed, seeking employment or pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities. “Among them is a learner from Luthubeni who improved from 30% in Mathematics in Grade 10 to a Level 6 (70% – 79%) in Grade 12 and secured admission to Walter Sisulu University to study towards a Bachelor of Medicine in Clinical Practice” – Mbuyekezi Ntleki, Ekukhuleni Program Coordinator. In 2026, we will continue strengthening academic support while working closely with Pathways to help more learners turn their matric results into opportunities beyond school.

Bachelor passes
Matric results, 2023 to 2025



“AMONG THEM IS A LEARNER FROM LUTHUBENI WHO IMPROVED FROM 30% IN MATHEMATICS IN GRADE 10 TO A LEVEL 6 (70% – 79%) IN GRADE 12 AND SECURED ADMISSION TO WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY TO STUDY TOWARDS A BACHELOR OF MEDICINE IN CLINICAL PRACTICE”

Mbuyekezi Ntleki
Ekukhuleni Program Coordinator



GR 7-12+

Pathways

Growing together through Pathways means helping young people turn their ambitions into informed choices and opportunities beyond school.

Pathways supports learners through the often complicated journey from school into further study, training or work. This work begins as early as Grade 7, with career days at our partner schools giving learners time to explore different fields and begin imagining what may be possible beyond school. In 2025, we also introduced aptitude testing, strengthened career counselling and tertiary application support, and worked more closely with parents. Our support extended beyond learners in Axiom programmes: we helped 1,043 learners and community members complete tertiary applications during the year, making this guidance more accessible across the rural communities we serve.

The Class of 2025 reminded us that passing matric does not automatically translate into access. “While 31 Ekukhuleni learners achieved Bachelor passes, only 16 met the subject requirements for their intended courses. For the other 15, the achievement of passing well came with the disappointment of discovering that some pathways remained closed. We supported learners through applications, registration, funding delays and finding alternative accommodation when university residences were unavailable” – Azisiwe Somlenze, Pathways Senior Officer. In 2026, we will broaden our focus beyond tertiary study to include employment, skills development and entrepreneurship, while strengthening earlier career guidance, learner tracking, alumni support and partnerships with employers.

Hear from our alumni

“My name is Sihle Banjwa, and I am from Zithulele. I recently completed a Diploma in ICT Application Development at Walter Sisulu University. I am now applying for jobs and internships in information technology while working as an Ekukhuleni Facilitator. I support learners with Mathematics and Physical Sciences, which allows me to keep learning while helping others.

One of my goals for the near future is to build an online application platform for learners and parents. I was fortunate to receive support from Axiom’s careers team, who assisted me with applications and guided me as I considered different options for my future. Many learners and families in our rural villages do not have access to this kind of help. Some travel long distances simply to submit applications to schools, colleges and universities. So, I want to make it possible for them to apply from wherever they are while also helping them understand the options available to them. This would save families time and money and make the process easier.

My own journey with Axiom began through Masakhane and continued with Ekukhuleni. I received additional support in Mathematics, English and Physical Sciences. I enjoyed learning with young people from different schools, and I felt comfortable asking questions when I did not understand something. The extra time to practise helped me improve academically and become more confident.

I am grateful for the opportunities and experiences that have shaped my journey. I now have the chance to give the same kind of support to other learners.”

Sihle Banjwa
Class of 2020



“My name is Manelisi Phathekile, and I grew up in Mhlahlane Village. I am currently studying part-time towards a Bachelor of Education at the University of Fort Hare. I also work as an Ekukhuleni Facilitator, supporting learners while gaining experience in the work I hope to do after completing my degree.

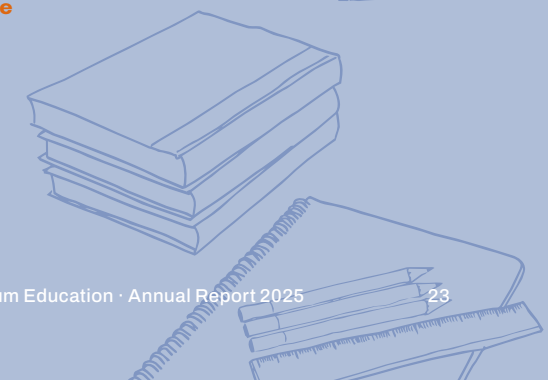
I want to become a teacher. Working as a facilitator gives me an opportunity to stand in front of learners, explain difficult work and learn how to help those who do not understand something the first time.

I first joined Axiom through Masakhane while attending Lubanzi Junior Secondary School. The programme helped me develop my critical-thinking skills and improve the way I approached

Mathematics problems. When I moved to Sea View Senior Secondary School, I joined Ekukhuleni and received additional support in Mathematics, Physical Sciences and English. We were also given textbooks, stationery and other materials that helped us with our schoolwork.

I am no longer the learner receiving assistance from Axiom. I am now part of the organisation, working as a facilitator and assisting other learners through the same programme that supported me. Axiom helped me succeed as a learner, influenced my decision to study education and has given me a place to begin developing as a teacher.”

Manelisi Phathekile
Class of 2025



Education partnerships to strengthen pathways for rural youth

On 6 and 7 August 2025, Axiom Education and DGMT's Public School Partnerships hosted the second Rural Education Partnerships Conference in East London, in collaboration with the Eastern Cape Department of Education and the National Association of Social Change Entities in Education (NASCEE).

The vision for the conference was to deepen and expand the collaboration established through the inaugural gathering. By bringing together schools, government, civil society and other education partners, we wanted to share lessons, reflect on our work and plan the next steps. The conference also aimed to showcase partnership models that were strengthening education and post-school opportunities for rural youth, including Public School Partnerships and

Dr Langa
Director for Rural Education,
Department of Basic Education.

egates to recognise the strengths within rural communities: "Rurality should not be perceived or spoken about as deficient and powerless. There is power within us and the environments we work in."

what was working, where implementation was falling short and what different partners could contribute.



Financials

2025 AT A GLANCE

R36.86 million Total income	R37.23 million Total expenditure as per P&L	R861,091 Capital investment	R358,528 Deficit for the year (includes depreciation of around R1m)
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Financial overview

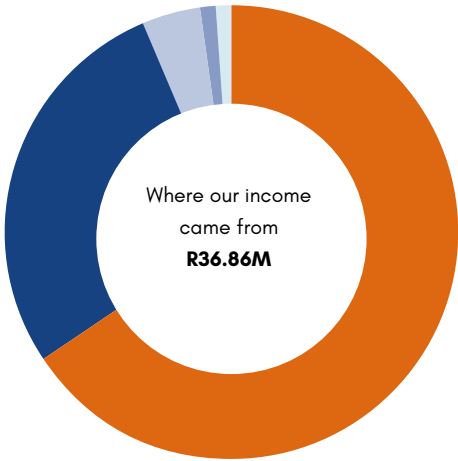
2025 was a year of continued growth for Axiom, with total income rising to R36.86 million, up from R32.41 million in 2024, an increase of 13.7%. Of this, R35.96 million came from revenue, with a further R905,708 earned in interest over the year.

This growth came alongside rising costs. Total expenditure increased from R32.64 million in 2024 to R37.23 million in 2025, driven largely by the people at the heart of Axiom’s work. Salaries and direct employee costs came to approximately R29.64 million, or 79.6% of total expenditure, a reflection of a delivery model built on people working directly with learners, schools and programme teams across our rural footprint.

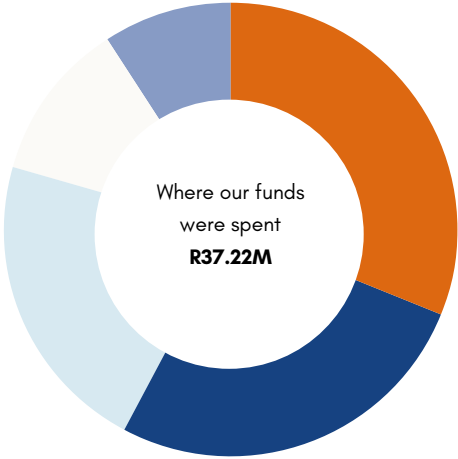
We also invested R861,091 in capital during the year, with the purchase of 3 vehicles essential to keeping our teams moving and equipped across Axiom’s dispersed rural sites.

The funding environment became more constrained during the year. In response, management reviewed the organisation’s cost base and undertook restructuring to bring expenditure into closer alignment with available funding and strengthen longer term financial sustainability.

Income source	Amount	Share
South African foundations and trusts	R24.27m	65.8%
International foundations and donors	R10.30m	27.9%
Public and government funding (excluding SEF salaries)	R329,788	0.9%
Individual South Africans and family donors	R480,682	1.3%
Other income, including interest and rental income	R1.49m	4.0%
Total	R36.86m	100%



Expenditure breakdown	Amount	%
Public School Partnerships	R11.64m	31.3%
Operations, Programme Management and Organisational Support	R9.96m	26.8%
Literacy	R8.03m	21.6%
Central Education, curriculum and training	R4.25m	11.4%
Other programmes and pilots	R3.34m	9.0%
Total	R37.22m	100%



FULL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Read Axiom Education’s full 2025 Audited Annual Financial Statements [here](#).

South African funders remained the largest contributors to Axiom’s income in 2025, complemented by strong international donor support. Together, these funding relationships enabled the organisation to sustain a significantly larger programme footprint during the year.

Although the year closed with a relatively small net deficit of R358,528 (after depreciation), in light of the tougher economic and funding climate, we were grateful not to need to use any of our reserves as we head into 2026.

Partners and supporters



To our funders, your support makes it possible for us to develop, empower and nurture the leaders of tomorrow. We are grateful for your continued partnership, your confidence in our work and the trust you place in us to use your resources responsibly.

To our partners and stakeholders, Axiom does not work in isolation. We value your collaboration and the commitment we share to creating greater opportunities for young people.

And to our learners, the future is yours. As you continue your journey, remember that every challenge you overcome brings new possibilities into view. We recognise your determination to build a better future, and we will continue to encourage and support you every step of the way.

Nokwanele Mbewu
Board Member



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NPO Number: 076-728-NPO
PBO Number: 930034907

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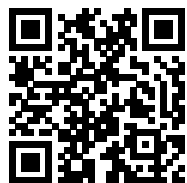
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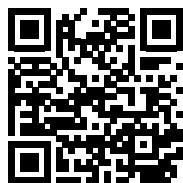
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ENSURING THAT EVERY RURAL LEARNER LEAVES SCHOOL WITH PURPOSE, AGENCY, AND OPTIONS



Axiom Education



**Ubuntu Global
Connectors**

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