



NAVIGATING  
TO NUMBER **01**

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





# PASSING ON THE BATON

NAVIGATING  
TO NUMBER 01

## 2024 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

by Prof. Kenneth Mlungisi Ngcoza

**I regard myself as a child of GADRA. Were it not for this wonderful organisation I would not have had access to higher education, and I would therefore most certainly not be the professor and professional I am today. My association with the organisation has been protracted, having lasted for over 50 years. It has also been multifaceted; I have benefited as a bursary recipient and I have served as a science teacher, a donor, Board member and Chairperson.**

I have been the Chairperson of GADRA Education since 2012. At the 2024 AGM we indicated that there would be a managed leadership transition over the next few years. Specifically in 2025, I will step down as Chairperson. It is therefore apt for me to reflect briefly here over some of the most significant organisational achievements of the past thirteen years.

- The GADRA Matric School (GMS) has been a wonderfully successful upgrading institution since its establishment in 1994. In 2014, we re-oriented the school, pointing it towards Rhodes University, to good effect. It has been the university's biggest feeder school for the past decade and its most prolific producer of graduates since 2021.
- I have had close ties with Rhodes University for approximately forty years. I am thus thrilled that we formed a very close institutional relationship with the university since the inauguration of Professor Mabizela in 2015. The relationship has produced excellent educational outcomes, especially under the framework of the Vice-Chancellor's Initiative (VCI) to Revitalise Public Schooling in Makhandla.
- Over the past decade, GADRA's primary education programme has been characterised by innovation and impact. Two of the most significant highlights were GADRA's successful leadership of the Vestas Literacy Consortium from 2015 – 2023 and the piloting and institutionalisation of the wonderful Whistle Stop School (WSS). Given the importance of strong, durable educational foundations, we are thrilled that the Grade 4 comprehension competence rates in Makhandla are currently double the national average.
- The only way that every child can be afforded quality education is for the public sector to flourish. Thus, the most pleasing of all outcomes has been massive improvements in the educational outcomes achieved in local no-fee schools over the past decade. We no longer talk about dysfunctional schools; instead, we celebrate schools of excellence. The improvement of public sector education was celebrated at the 2024 Makhandla Education Summit.

A tradition that I instituted at the Board was to begin every meeting with affirmations for members for accomplishments registered since the previous meeting. There have been numerous affirmations in each and every meeting, thereby confirming that we have joined hands to good effect. We have walked a long way together and we will carry on in this vein because we want educational excellence for all our children.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED  
31 DECEMBER 2024

## Income and Expenditure Statement

	2024 (ZAR)	2023 (ZAR)
<b>INCOME</b>		
Donations	6 247 707	6 940 007
Interest and Sundry Income	4 378 208	4 045 256
Fees	2 492 798	1 870 781
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13 118 713</b>	<b>12 856 044</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Primary Education Programme	2 835 816	2 746 321
Secondary Education Programme	5 027 101	4 877 414
Tertiary Education Programme	548 007	449 702
Research and Publicity	599 260	521 256
Administration	692 668	452 685
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9 702 852</b>	<b>9 047 378</b>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>3 415 861</b>	<b>3 808 666</b>

## Balance Sheet

	2024 (ZAR)	2023 (ZAR)
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Non-current Assets	35 848 512	35 360 858
Current Assets	9 464 929	6 515 488
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>45 313 441</b>	<b>41 876 346</b>
<b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>		
Equity	43 523 341	39 878 564
Liabilities	1 790 100	1 997 782
<b>TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>	<b>45 313 441</b>	<b>41 876 346</b>

GADRA HAS SOUGHT TO  
REVITALISE PUBLIC  
SCHOOLING  
IN MAKHANDA



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# SCALING THE SUMMIT


*By 2028, Makhanda emerges as the leading academic educational centre and city in South Africa and is recognised as such, thereby affording all local children and young people the benefit of good quality and relevant education at pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary levels.*

From the perspective of GADRA, this is a wonderful outcome, since the vision is perfectly aligned with our overarching organisational goal for the period. Essentially, GADRA's vision has been taken up by the city at large!


When GADRA formulated its strategic plan in 2022, it adopted a 'balanced scorecard' approach to determining city-wide educational performance, comprising various aspects. Similarly, the Summit adopted the following targets as indicators of excellence:


 **50%**  
G4 Learners  
reading for  
meaning  
(baseline 38%)

 **60%**  
G12 Bachelor  
Pass Rate  
(baseline 38%)

 **75%**  
Retention Rate  
(to final NSC  
examinations)  
(baseline 69%)

 **200**  
Local disadvantaged  
youth registering for  
First-year full-time  
study annually  
(baseline 140)

 **90%**  
G12 pass  
percentage  
(baseline 80%)

 **150**  
Local disadvantaged  
youth graduating  
from Rhodes annually  
(baseline 80)

On 24 and 25 January 2024, Professor Sizwe Mabizela convened the inaugural Makhanda Education Summit. It was a marvellous occasion for the local education community, that will have far-reaching implications and positive spin-offs for many years to come. One of the highlights of the Summit was the adoption of a city-wide vision for the sector. It reads as follows:

In other words, if Makhanda meets all six of these targets it can rightfully claim to be the leading academic city in South Africa. For the next few years, GADRA will report on city-wide performance against these targets as we collectively endeavour to scale the summit.

In 2024, excellent progress has been made in relation to the following indicators: retention rate; 1st year registrations and local graduations. Performance in this regard is reported elsewhere in this report.

The Makhanda Education Summit was historic and pathbreaking. It was the first time in South Africa that civil society drove an attempt to mobilise and coordinate all education stakeholders at the scale of a city. For this reason, GADRA's Ashley Westaway and Sakhe Ntlabezo of the Makhanda Circle of Unity co-authored an academic piece on the Summit.



*Published in the November 2024 edition of the African Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement.*



GADRA MATRIC SCHOOL IS  
THE UNIVERSITY'S LEADING  
FEEDER SCHOOL



## GAD-RUATION

Throughput of local disadvantaged students to Rhodes is surging. This outcome can be attributed directly to the repositioning of the GADRA Matric School (GMS) a decade ago and the phenomenal success of the award-winning Nine-Tenths mentoring programme in fee-exempt public schools. GMS has been the university's leading feeder school since 2015, and the public-school class of 2024 raised the bar considerably in terms of good quality Bachelor passes.

For the past few years, GMS has consistently contributed 80 students to the full-time 1st year cohort at Rhodes. But this year, we have reached new heights with approximately 100 alumni registering during 2025 Orientation week. Similarly, the 2024 public school cohort has outshone all previous groups, with approximately 90 students being accepted for full-time study. In total, therefore, approximately 190 disadvantaged local students have gained access to the top university in the Eastern Cape Province. This smashes the previous throughput record of approximately 140 registrations.

As the numbers of local disadvantaged students gaining access to Rhodes grow, we are increasingly mindful of Wally Morrow's distinction between physical and epistemological access to higher education. We are thrilled that increasing numbers of locals are gaining physical access to Rhodes, but are they

managing to access the academic content? In a bid to be able to answer this question, GADRA put a distinct focus on monitoring and support mechanisms for 1st year students. Our monitoring mechanisms are not yet adequate, since we rely entirely on cooperation from Rhodes University, which has various legal and other technical matters to consider. In 2024, GADRA piloted a new support mechanism for GMS alumni undertaking 1st year study at Rhodes, called the Peer Support Network (PSN). The pilot was an unreserved success, prompting us to invite all local students to join the PSN in 2025. The uptake has been enthusiastic.

The 2024 graduation statistics and outcomes were the best that they have ever been, from the perspective of the successful graduation of local disadvantaged students. 69 GMS alumni graduated triumphantly during the April ceremonies and a further 34 alumni of Nine-tenths graduated. That is to say that for the first time, over 100 local disadvantaged students graduated from Rhodes in a calendar year. The previous record was 78. In other words, the 2024 graduation outcomes give us cause for hope that we are indeed succeeding in facilitating epistemological access.



# A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS

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Over the past five years the quality of the public schooling in Makhanda has risen steadily. It has improved across all four phases of basic education, namely the foundation, intermediate, senior and FET (Further Education and Training) phases. This assertion is clearly backed up by taking a look at fundamental indicators in the 2024 NSC results.

### RETENTION RATE SOARS

A high drop-out rate results from poor literacy and numeracy skills. By contrast, if good literacy and numeracy foundations are laid in primary school, this translates into a healthy retention rate. Over the past five years, the retention rate has increased from a paltry 45% in 2020, all the way up to 74% in 2024. Whereas only 540 local youths wrote the NSC exams in 2020, in 2024 883 candidates were entered. 343 more local young people are now writing the annual NSC exams than was the case five years ago.

Whilst there are certain technical reasons for this phenomenal improvement (especially the termination of the disastrous policy of 'modularisation'), these do not account for the quantum of the improvement. The underlying substantive reason for the soaring retention rate is improved learner foundations in literacy and numeracy. This is thanks to the South African Numeracy Chair, the Vestas Literacy Consortium, the Whistle Stop School, BuddingQ, and other interventions.

### METEORIC MATRIC PASSES

The Makhanda pass rate is now considerably higher than it was a decade ago, despite the massive improvement in the retention rate. This has translated into burgeoning numbers of candidates obtaining their NSC. In 2024, 720 students passed the final exams, compared to 432 in 2020. This amounts to a 67% increase in the number of local young people securing their NSC. Given that a NSC is a prerequisite for employment in this country, this is an important outcome in relation to community well-being.

### BURGEONING BACHELORS

Whilst obtaining a NSC is a necessary condition for obtaining meaningful employment, it is not a sufficient condition in this regard. It is thus in the educational and economic interests of all students to obtain a good quality NSC certificate so that they qualify for higher education. The strongest indicator of quality is a 'Bachelor'-level pass. For the past decade, GADRA has overseen the implementation of the impactful Nine-Tenths mentoring programme, in partnership with Rhodes University. The programme aims to increase the number of Bachelor passes and to strengthen throughput to Rhodes. It is thus a wonderful outcome that the Makhanda public school class of 2024 obtained 377 Bachelor passes, by far the highest number ever produced locally in a single year. Prior to 2020, the city had never reached 200 Bachelors; now we're almost double that milestone.

OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS THE  
QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING HAS RISEN  
IN MAKHANDA





# RECOGNISING PUBLIC-SECTOR EXCELLENCE

**GADRA has sought to revitalise public schooling in Makhanda through building strong communities of practice in the basic education sector. The two communities that we have focused on during the past decade have been leaders and teachers.**

In 2013, GADRA facilitated the formation of the Grahamstown Principals' Forum. Initially, we set up separate forums for primary and high school principals. These later merged. From 2016 onwards, the principals took charge of convening the forum; they have sustained it ever since. One of the initial interventions forged under the Vice-Chancellor's Initiative (VCI) to Revitalise Public Schooling was Principals' leadership training. To its credit, the Rhodes Business School has offered leadership training to different levels of school leadership for the past eight years.

For many years, especially when GADRA Education managed the erstwhile Vestas Consortium, we offered accredited Teacher Professional Development (TPD) short-courses for primary school teachers, in partnership with Rhodes University.

A precondition for the Summit vision that Makhanda emerges as the leading education city in South Africa to be realised, is that the school leadership and teaching communities grow and develop. In early 2023, Victoria Freudenheim of Kavod Trust suggested the initiation of an annual Makhanda Teacher Awards programme as a

mechanism to celebrate outstanding practice and to raise the status of the teaching profession. This suggestion was perfectly timed, given the strides that have been made in all sectors of education across the city over the past 10 years.

The Kavod Trust provided the funding and GADRA teamed up with Faculty of Education at Rhodes University (RU) to run the first annual awards in 2024. A committee of experts was formed consisting of GADRA and RU Education staff. The committee decided on 7 categories for the 2024 awards, with objectively verifiable criteria stipulated for each.

An adjudication team was set up for each category. They included adjudicators from the Centre for Social Development, the Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education (PECE), the Department of Secondary & Post-School Education, the Rhodes Business School, Rhodes University Community Engagement as well as from Funda Wande and PJ Olivier High School.

The 2024 awards were made at a wonderful gala event held at PJ Olivier School on 29 August. The event was addressed by the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, Professor Sizwe Mabizela: ***"Teaching is the most noble of all professions. It is not just a job but rather a vocation, a higher calling to serve our nation and humanity"***. All the winners were popular choices, confirming the credibility and objectivity of the adjudication process.



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*The goal is that by 2028, Makhanda will emerge as the leading academic educational centre and city in South Africa and is recognised as such.*



**50%**

G4 Learners reading  
for meaning  
(baseline 38%)



**60%**

G12 Bachelor  
Pass Rate  
(baseline 38%)



**90%**

G12 pass  
percentage  
(baseline 80%)



**75%**

Retention Rate  
(to final NSC  
examinations)  
(baseline 69%)



**200**

Local disadvantaged youth  
registering for First-year full-  
time study annually  
(baseline 140)



**150**

Local disadvantaged  
youth graduating  
from Rhodes annually  
(baseline 80)



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Local students who registered at Rhodes University in 2024, with Professor Mabizela





**MORE INFORMATION**

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