



# Why we did it

**O**ur purpose in developing the 'My Best Teacher' booklet series was, like Jansen's, to counter negative descriptions of schools and teachers by identifying and paying tribute to good teachers. We wanted to continue his message of hope. But, more importantly, we wanted to focus our gaze on the Foundation Phase as a critical stage of schooling which, until recently, has received little attention. We therefore felt it important to draw on the voices of our Foundation Phase group of student teachers and invite them to tell their stories. Although we did not restrict students to writing about Foundation Phase teachers, we were heartened to see that a number of students chose a Foundation Phase teacher as their best teacher, and we dedicated a section of the booklet to these stories.

Jansen acknowledges that a limitation of his book was that the advertising campaign used to seek out the stories privileged those of English speakers and people living in urban areas of South Africa. He explains how his team "could not penetrate all the small villages and towns of South Africa outside the reach of the English newspapers" (2011, p. 14). We, on the other hand, are delighted that a number of our stories originate from the distant rural areas to which Jansen refers.

Finally, we believe that by paying attention to the voices of our students and valuing their contributions, we are modelling good teaching practice. We hope that when our students become qualified Foundation Phase teachers, they, in turn, will value the voices of their learners and encourage them to write about and reflect on their experiences.

Enjoy reading the stories of our students' best teachers!

# Foundation Phase stories and classrooms



## She is all definitions of what love means

*A TRIBUTE TO MISS SINDISWA MAMBINJA, NTABA MARIA  
PRIMARY SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM SIBUSISIWE BEJA*

**N**taba Maria Primary School is a Catholic school that taught children from Grade R to Grade 9 when I was there. The school had its origins in the Catholic Church and continues to teach in the traditions of the faith. The school was well resourced and provided a wonderful learning atmosphere for about 15 teachers and 900 learners. I spent 11 years of my life at this school, and the amazing memories began when I met the wonderful Miss Sindiswa Mambinja in my Grade 1 year.

I was anxious about the start of big school and cried the whole morning as I was being bathed. I did not want to go to school, scared that I would be bullied and not find happiness as had happened to me in pre-school at the same school. I was also late for my first day of school because of transport issues, which made me even more nervous that the teacher would shout at me for being late. As I walked into the classroom and Miss Mambinja approached I cried and held onto my mother's waist, begging her not to leave me there. As Miss Mambinja approached me I could feel her love and she assured me that nothing bad would happen and I would enjoy my stay at the big school. She promised to look after me always. I gave in and held her hand. That was the first time I had felt love from a stranger.

Being in Miss Mambinja's class was the most exciting year I ever had at school. She was in a happy mood every morning and never showed signs of having a bad day. She made learning a wonderful thing to take part in and did not focus on academics only but also on emotional and physical learning. Miss Mambinja was also the junior coach for netball, which was a foreign sport to me at that time. Most of us did not feel comfortable with playing sports, but by the time we had left Miss Mambinja's class we had fallen in love with sport. She always found a way to encourage us when we thought that we could not carry on with a difficult task. Miss Mambinja showed us love in so many ways and never yelled at us when we did wrong. Instead she would talk to us and show us better ways. She planted seeds of love and hope as she always wanted us to love ourselves and others around us; to always believe in ourselves. She had faith that we would find a way of conquering any difficult situation.

Growing up with a single mother, I often felt like my mother did not give me enough attention as I was the last born. Miss Mambinja found ways to fill the void without making other learners in the classroom feel like they did not matter. She gave every one of us in the classroom the same amount of attention and we all felt special and loved by this wonderful teacher. She made school exciting and fun and calling her just a teacher would be depriving her of a worthy title; Miss Mambinja was a mother, an aunt and a go-to person for her Grade 1 class. Even when we moved on to other grades, we carried the seeds that Miss Mambinja had planted within us. When we had problems we would still go to her, because we found her judgments and advice always fair for everyone involved in a particular problem. Being fair and honest at all times is an attribute that has stuck with me because of the lovely Miss Mambinja.

Out of all the teachers and classes in my 14 years of schooling, no one has reached the level of Miss Mambinja. At just seven years old the love and influence that Miss Mambinja had in my life was clear for me to see. Her love and true passion for what she was doing, and is still doing, outshone all others and instilled a light in me. My whole life has been shaped by the teachings of Miss Sindiswa Mambinja. Thank you, Miss Mambinja, for being the definition of love.



I entered the bright, colourful and well-arranged Grade 1B classroom feeling very quiet, shy and afraid, as it was my first year at **big** school. There stood Miss Simmons in a flowery dress, big afro, bare feet and red lipstick, with a blooming smile on her face. She captured my attention immediately.

The school was an Afrikaans Home Language School. As a child, I was a busy bee, loved to talk, could not sit still, was always on my feet and made the most noise in the class. I was the little person who always instructed the others.

Throughout my childhood years, when I was at my most vulnerable, there was this one special “*Kaalvoet Skepsel*” mother figure” who encouraged me to discover my talents. Today I recognise the great sacrifices she made for us. Miss Simmons was more than an educator; she was my mother, friend and a counsellor who understood my family circumstances.

During her English FAL shared reading lessons, she would sit “*kaalvoet*” in front of the class where she was comfortable. She allowed us to take off our shoes and make ourselves comfortable too. She would call me to the front and ask me to sit next to her on the small chair and then she would read one page and I would read the next. She permitted us to play with our tone of voice and make gestures, allowing us to explore when reading. Her excellent teaching strategy was to have different learners leading different sections of the class, allowing us to excel in our areas of strength.

In our classroom during the second break it was PT, which we now know as Physical Education. I would refuse to go and play rugby with the boys because I was petrified I would break a bone as I was very tiny. She would notice something was wrong and come to me with a smile, saying, “*kom hier my eie tjind*” and give me a big hug and a big cookie. She allowed me to go and watch how the girls played mini netball. One day Miss Simmons said, “Ella, go to the centre of the netball court and put the bib on and play with the girls.” What I cherished most about her was that she inspired and persuaded me to play and discover without being frightened. The opportunity to explore the netball court made me fall in love with the sport and I played netball right through for the A team. Miss Simmons was also our Netball coach. She led us with pride and was focussed. She treasured players who were observant and energetic on the court. Allowing me to play netball taught me that everyone is unique and special, and you have to try out new things to find what you are good at.

Her classroom was the biggest in the school and had the sunniest spots where I would sit and play in the fantasy corner. The room was filled with colour which enlivened the class but also instilled in us to be neat in our work. She organised her class in alphabetic order or according to our academics and sports and I valued this as it encouraged us to compete with one another.

In the morning we had bible study lessons that were inculcated into all we learnt. She inspired and motivated us to believe in ourselves and our abilities. She knew that we would exceed expectation. She taught us that our minds will believe everything we tell them and that we should feed our minds with faith, truth and love. I still use these words when the storms of life shake me.

Miss Simmons drilled abstract thinking and creativity in Maths. Things came alive in her classroom when it was time to discuss our Maths homework. She masterfully fashioned an atmosphere which was conducive to effective learning. She stirred us all and inspired the minds of the entire class with her vibrant everyday examples, asking open-ended questions which allowed us to engage positively without being shy or scared to answer.

It astounded me to see a person who taught only out of pure love for teaching. It is no wonder that learners, 10 years after leaving the school, kept in touch with her. She is a great human being who offered guidance! She gave us hope, direction, and new ideas. She challenged us and shaped the way we see the world.

Miss Simmons played a big role in my decision to pursue a career as a Foundation Phase educator. Her colourful and playful classroom so conducive to learning and her unique teaching methods opened



# “Kaalvoet Skepsel”

**A TRIBUTE TO MISS ALTHEA SIMMONS, PEARSTON  
PRIMARY SCHOOL, PEARSTON, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM ELDRIDGE ELLA GOLIATH**

my eyes to the possibility of becoming a teacher who could encourage, instruct, mentor, inspire, guide and praise others. It is who I am. I have been tremendously blessed to have Miss Simmons as my Grade 1B *kaalvoet skepsel* teacher. Today I am also a netball coach because of the opportunity I was given to seek my own path and explore.

“Wealth, if you use it, comes to an end; learning, if you use it, increases” was Miss Simmons motto and I still use it today.



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS CHRISTIAN, ST MARY'S PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM SAFFRON STEYN**

**T**he best teacher I could ever encounter was my Grade R teacher, Mrs Christian at St Marys Pre-Primary. She was not only my teacher, she was also my aunt. What made her special is that she was the sweetest and kindest person one can ever encounter. She taught us a lot. If it were not for her I would not be the person I am today. From a very young age she taught us the value of life; that not everyone has a roof over their heads, or food to eat, and some do not even have parents. She also taught us the meaning of sharing; she taught us during our lunch time that we should not waste our food and that we should share if someone does not have something to eat.

Mrs Christian loved what she was doing and had a passion for teaching. She loved children and she always had a smile on her face. I was always excited to go to school because I knew that whatever she had planned for the day was going to be fun. She was engaging and she always had our attention. She had a great relationship with everyone and would never single anyone out. She was also never absent from school unless she was really sick.

Each day when we got to class she would ask us to tell her what good turn we had done for someone else, because that was our task every day. After school she encouraged us to do something for someone less fortunate. Even though we were still young, it was a value she instilled in us. I try every single day to do something good for someone else who maybe needs it.

Mrs Christian had a soft and gentle voice which was always soothing when it was story time. She had a good sense of humour and always made us laugh in class, but when it came to teaching she was serious and there was never a day that we did not work. I loved arts and crafts time in her class because it was always fun to do. It was mostly educational, for example, she would let us choose any letter of the alphabet and ask us to make or draw something that starts with that letter.

For my favourite teacher, I have chosen the following letters of the alphabet;

**T** - tough. Even though she was a soft person, she was tough, and nothing ever made her feel like giving up on us.

**E** - encourage. Mrs Christian was always there to encourage us to be anything we wanted to be and to follow our dreams. She was always there to help me when I had any difficulties.

**A** - ambition. Mrs Christian made it possible for us to achieve our goals. We had a career day where we had to dress up as someone we wanted to become. I dressed up in formal wear and when she asked me who I was supposed to be I said "I am a teacher".

**C** - caring. My Grade R teacher was very caring. She had a soft spot for children and always made us feel special in class. She treated us all equally and, although I was her niece, at school I was treated the same as all the other learners in class. She was like a mother figure to all of us.

**H** - honest. When she made a mistake she would apologise to us and admit she was wrong. She taught us that honesty was the best policy and that it is wrong to lie.

**E** - enthusiastic. Mrs Christian was always excited when she got into class and her lessons were always fun.

**R** - role model. If it were not for my Grade R teacher I would never have thought of becoming a future foundation phase teacher. Her love for her job made me the person I am today, she proved the value of a good teacher.

I am ever grateful that I was in Mrs Christian's class, the values she taught me still stick with me. I can proudly say she is the reason I wanted to become a teacher.

**She held my  
hand,  
leading  
me into the  
future**



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS KHWABABANE, DANINGE PRIMARY SCHOOL, PEDDIE, EASTERN CAPE, FROM LUDUMO MGOBO**

**D**aninege Primary School is at Gcinisa location in Peddie. When I was a learner there, the school would hold prayers in the morning. From Monday to Wednesday we wore a white shirt and on Thursday and Friday we wore a yellow shirt. The school was a positive environment and my Grade 1 teacher was one of the teachers who contributed to that by making learners feel welcome at school.

Mrs Khwababane was my Grade 1 teacher and she gave me a solid foundation from which to learn and grow. She motivated me to become a better person in life, made me believe in my potential and to understand that there was nothing at all that could make me give up. She taught me how to read, write and to listen. She played the role of a parent and dedicated her time to me and other learners. Her love for teaching made me love teaching.

I thought she had a huge and incomparable task because she taught learners who could not write. She also taught in an overcrowded classroom but she never gave up. Her way of teaching is still relevant today. I call her my best teacher because she did not only teach us to read and write. She taught us humanity and to care for each other; to understand other learners' situations and to help when necessary. She taught many of us to apologise when we did something wrong. She also made me aware of my strength, ability, talents and dreams. Because of her, I am about to become that person I wanted to be when I was in Grade 1; a teacher who would continue the legacy of love and respect that she gave me.

Mrs Khwababane did not discriminate between learners but loved them all as her own children. She played the role of a mother to me because I was living with my grandparents at the time. She helped me to feel strong and not afraid of the school environment at all. Many of the things that I should have learnt at home, I learnt from her; qualities such as respect, love and understanding of others in my space. When I started Grade 1 I was egocentric but she helped me to become a child full of hope and love.

She was an inspiration to many of us. She was kind but she also had her own way of disciplining children when needed, such as standing up or putting your finger on your mouth. I still remember the rhymes and lessons that we had and it was such fun being in her class that I used to imitate her when I was home. More than 20 years have passed but the fun and love still exist. She is still teaching and continues to love, nurture and encourage her learners to do their best.

I went back to my old school during my second year at university to observe in her classroom. It was amazing how she taught those learners, she is inclusive in her teaching and nurtures learners according to their abilities. A week of observation was too little, it felt like a day. She is one of the greatest teachers I have ever met.



**No building  
will last  
without a  
solid  
foundation**



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS MASSEY AND MY MOTHER, GOOD SHEPHERD PRIMARY SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM TABISA BOOI**

I started school in the early 90s. At this time our country was in transition from the apartheid era to a democratic country. It was still rare for black children to attend school outside of the township. My father decided that I would attend school at Good Shepherd Primary School, situated in the middle of the Grahamstown CBD, which we refer to as town. At the time of my enrolment, the school's language of instruction was strictly Afrikaans. I did not know a single word of any language other than isiXhosa and had to keep up with the rest of my classmates. The first obstacle I needed to overcome was to learn the Afrikaans language. My adjustment was not easy but it was smooth because I had great support from my teachers; my Grade 1 class teacher, Mrs Massey, and my mother who taught me at home.

I never realised how blessed I was growing up until I was asked to write about my favourite teacher for this booklet. Mrs Massey was my Grade 1 class teacher; I was in her class until Grade 3. She knew my mother, also a teacher by profession, from the small foundation phase teachers' network in our town and liaised with her on how to assist me in the areas where I was struggling. In the classroom, the other children would sometimes make fun of the fact that I couldn't speak Afrikaans and the manner in which I pronounced words. But Mrs Massey would remind me of how we are all different. She would highlight all the good things that I could do that the other children were struggling with and that would help me feel better about myself. I trusted Mrs Massey with all I had, and saw her as my heroine because she stood up for me.

I remember her saying to me, "You are going to be very powerful, because you are going to speak more languages than most of your classmates". At first, I remember nodding with a smile, hardly understanding what she was saying but I knew that they were words of encouragement.

Mrs Massey was a patient teacher, because I do not recall her ever showing any frustration with me or any other learner in the class. She was soft spoken and had creative ways of making learning fun. She used colour codes to teach; this made learning fun for me because I understood better that way. She would write vowels of the alphabet in red and the consonants in green. Her beautiful, bright classroom was a true reflection of her personality. She always smiled (and still does whenever she sees me) and I never feared asking her about anything.

My mother had taught me the five vowels, how to write them and their sounds before I started school; I could recognise the alphabet and read simple words, I knew how to count and write my name. As a result I learnt to speak English much quicker than I learnt Afrikaans and this is where Mrs Massey and my mother's team efforts came to light. Although my mother did not know Afrikaans well enough to teach it, with guidance from Mrs Massey, she understood enough to assist me. She would teach me Afrikaans word construction in isiXhosa. Echoing what Mrs Massey had said to me, she would create stories on how languages were all related and how I should not fear sounding different to other children. Creatively linking isiXhosa to Afrikaans, they made me feel like I could learn anything.

I still have a great relationship with Mrs Massey and obviously my mother as well. They play a very important role in my life and I hold them very close to my heart. After my Matric I enrolled at NMU but did not complete my studies. They never gave up on me and kept reminding me of how brilliant I am and what a difference I was born to make. My mother at home and via text messages; Mrs Massey at the Pick n Pay isles or in the streets when I bumped into her.

Both these ladies have now retired and I still look up to them. The love they showed me in my early life inspired me to become a foundation rock myself.

# My foundation rocks



***A TRIBUTE TO MRS MAKHAPELA, ZIMBABU PRIMARY SCHOOL, ZIMBABU LOCATION, KING WILLIAM'S TOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM ZIZIPHO NGCINGI***

**M**ost people define a good teacher as someone who encourages and helps their learners to excel academically. I believe that this is true, but it is a little off the mark. Best teachers do not only help learners to excel, they also make learners want to attend to school. A good teacher cares about more than just the learners' academics, but also about their insecurities and problems. Most importantly, they support the learners through this. My best teacher was Mrs Makhaphela, she taught me years ago when I was in foundation phase but I still recall her as a good teacher.

She was an old woman with long black-and-grey hair surrounding a young and beautiful dark face. And she loved to smile. Mrs Makhapela taught me at Zimbabwe Primary school in Grade 1 and 2 from 2005 to 2006. The school was located in a rural area and was equipped with seven classrooms and six teachers. There were no more than 300 learners in the school.

Mrs Makhapela was passionate about her job as an educator. She changed the way I viewed the world. She knew she was there for academic purposes and personal help. She was like a mother to me, because whenever I was in need, she helped me. Honestly, I did not want to pass her grade because I knew that the next teacher wouldn't be the same as her. Mrs Makhapela taught us respect for our elders as well as for our peers. She taught us to treat them with the same respect as we treated our parents. She also taught us how to solve personal problems, how to appreciate the little things, never to judge and to be happy and confident about the work we create.

She was a kind, lovable and good-mannered woman. She was always neat and professional at school, as was her classroom. This indirectly taught me to take care of the environment I live in and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We could go to her for help and support at any time during school hours. She was gentle and willing to help where she could. If we had something we did not understand in class, she would provide individual attention and go through the work until we understood. We were treated as if we were her own children.

Even though we were still young, she was honest and respected us, we never heard her raise her voice. I felt comfortable to express how I felt, and was able to listen and learn in her class. She was warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring. No one ever knew if she was having a bad day because she always left her own problems outside of school. She made us feel a sense of belonging in her classroom and in the school.

The time I spent with her is memorable and will stay with me till my last days on earth. Mrs Makhapela is the one person who inspired me to become the teacher I want to be today because of the good qualities and values I saw in her.



# A kind woman and an empathetic teacher



***A TRIBUTE TO MRS NDABA, BASA TUTORIAL INSTITUTE,  
JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG,  
FROM NOSIPHO ZONDO***

**M**y tribute goes to the woman who brought light into my life when all I could see was darkness. She was full of hope, love, courage, and she was very proud of her identity — something I wasn't sure I had or even knew. Mrs Ndaba was my foundation phase teacher, from Grades 1 to 3. She saw things in me I couldn't see in myself. She was an extremely patient teacher who took her time to build a relationship with each and every one of us. She was never forceful but patiently waited until we opened up to her.

When I started school I resented women in general. It was very difficult for her to build a relationship with me as she did with the other children in the class. However, she did not give up on me, let me sit by myself in the corner or even label me. She always had something new that would give me an opportunity to get closer to her, from asking for her help to presenting my work to her. I gave her a tough time and when I felt she was coming too close, I used to tell her to stop acting like my parent. I rejected her compliments and did not laugh at her jokes. Once she asked us to write to her, telling her what we liked and disliked. I wrote how much I disliked being in her class yet she did not take it personally, develop an attitude towards me or single me out. She realised that there was a problem at home.

From that day Mrs Ndaba knew exactly what to do to make me a better, happier person. She told me it was okay not to have a mother and said it makes my whole life special because I would grow up to be a wonderful, strong woman raised by her father. She taught me how to appreciate the little things in life because, even though they look very little to us, they mean and are worth more than we think. She taught me how to pray and talk to God about the things that bothered me. She taught me to see things from other people's perspectives and acknowledge that other people have problems too, some bigger than my own.

Mrs Ndaba would not tolerate disrespect, not even from peer to peer. She taught us humanity and treated us the same, whether we were well off, middle class or a poor child. Most of all, she was a proud Zulu woman. Her lessons would always end with her telling us how important it is to know and embrace our cultures. She told us how much our cultures depend on us in this evolving world. She believed our cultures gave us identity and a sense of belonging. On cultural days she would encourage us to wear our cultural clothing and bring traditional food to school. We would spend the last period of the day learning about different cultures and their foods. This helped us to understand what makes us different from each other, what brings us together and what makes us unique human beings.

When I moved on to intermediate phase she would still check up on me, asking me how I was coping, if I needed help or if I'd had lunch. She became the mother I never had but longed for. All the talks and encouragement she gave me helped more than I realised. They carried me through primary, to high school and now at varsity. She was a role model to all of us, and she's a big part of me becoming a teacher.

# Love and light



# Mother & father figures

**A TRIBUTE TO MRS MATSHOBA, QHASANA HIGH SCHOOL,  
MDANTSANE, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM ABONGILE DELIWE**

**N**ogal, that is what Mrs Matshoba said when we were naughty and noisy. We were just like any other learners, but I think we specialised in making noise. Unfortunately, her office was right next to our class, and Mrs Matshoba was a HOD. She would walk in and shout at us, “*Nogal*, my office is next door and that doesn’t stop you from making noise, you do not have respect.” We’d feel guilty after she had left, but later on when she taught us for her period it would be as if she hadn’t been angry at us. Sometimes she would use that phrase when someone made a joke. She would laugh and say, “*Nogal*” while trying to stop herself laughing. She was an amazing woman.

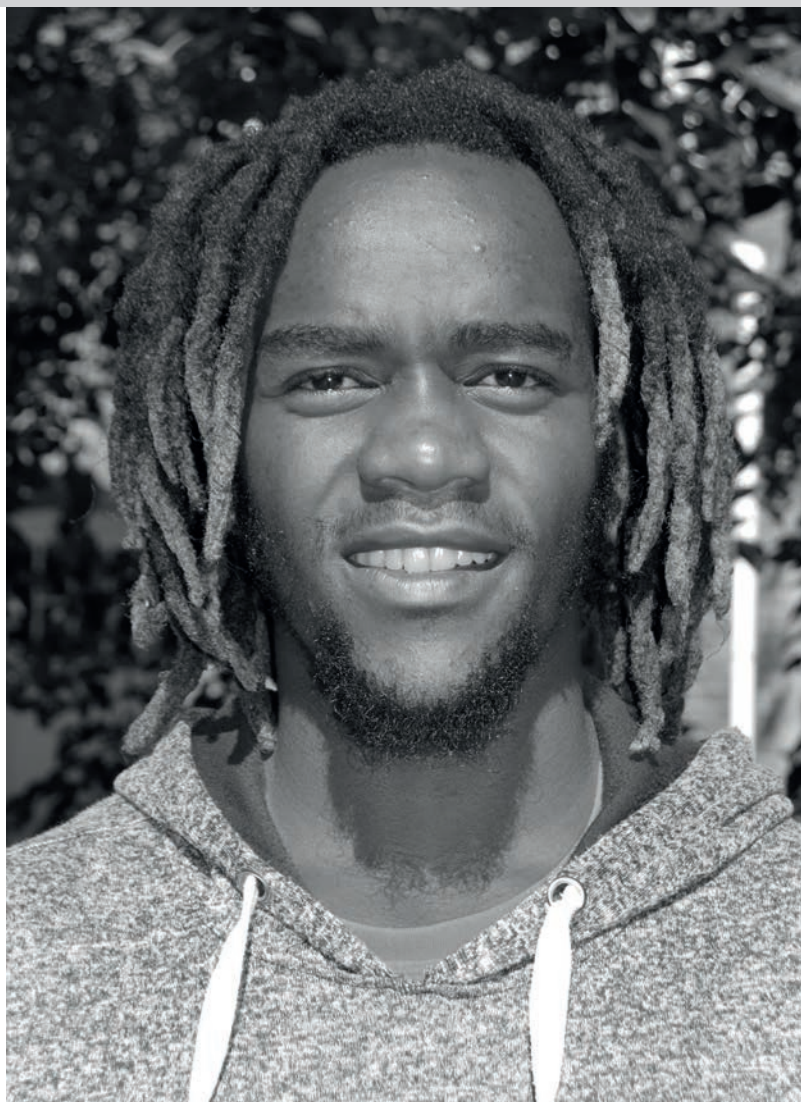
I am talking about someone who loved and respected us as learners. She was like a second mother to us. I highly respected her for that. She formed strong relationships with her learners, we could walk into her office at any time of the day and tell her our problems. She was kind, approachable and we all knew that we would receive comfort once we entered that office. Sometimes we wrote letters and left them on her desk, and she loved it. Some learners did not write who the letter was from but she even knew our handwriting. She would simply approach that learner and say, “I read your letter”. That was my teacher.

Mrs Matshoba did not just teach me so I could pass, but gave me the tools to be firm in life and to chase my dreams. She encouraged us all to dream big, be positive and not allow our current situations to determine who we are. She helped us to see the possibilities that would allow us to achieve the greatness for which we are destined in future. Sometimes it would feel like she was just selling us dreams, because she would talk about things that were beyond our imaginations. She liked setting our achievement bar high but when we failed something, it was not a big thing, she would help us to do better the next time.

Her classes were not like other classes, they were more of an open discussion. Sometimes we would discuss events happening in our country. She would help us to learn how to deal with and behave in different situations; she liked us to role play in order to understand something from another person’s point of view. She encouraged us to read and to explore different perspectives. Once she asked our views on money and, after we had all shared our thoughts, the conclusion was that the value of wealth is determined by how we used it. We looked at corruption and the many bad and good things happening in our country because of it. “Money is the source if the devil,” she would say. That day she shared her story about how she spent her first salary on her mother, encouraging us to always remember where we come from. She liked sharing her personal stories and telling us how she had overcome her own difficulties. Looking back, I can see that it is through the downfalls in life that one can truly connect with people.

Mrs Matshoba liked us to work hard and she gave us extra classes; we had to choose whether we would have morning or afternoon classes. She would organise us into study groups of five, and made sure there was a leader who would report back to her weekly. She left school at least two hours after school ended and would keep checking up on us to make sure we were studying. She even gave lifts to those who lived far from the school so that they had the time and the energy to learn.

She had a library program for us too. We would have two weeks to read a book and the following Friday we would hold a discussion



## “Nogal”

about it. We all complained about it, making excuses that we have to study for other subjects too, so she helped us with time management so we could do both. The discussions were nice though, we really enjoyed them and in return she would buy us cookies.

Mrs Matshoba made school fun and enjoyable. She was funny and she liked hearing jokes from us. Her classes had a relaxed and calm atmosphere. I remember one time she told us that we must find ways to enjoy school because it is our second home. We spent eight hours there, sometimes more, went home to eat and sleep and then returned to school. That was her reason for showing her comedian side.

Mrs Matshoba, my English teacher, second mother, comedian, motivator and leader.



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS M RAIJMAKERS, BEAULIEU COLLEGE,  
GAUTENG, FROM BEAULYNN ELIZA LIESCHING**

**M**rs Raijmakers was a teacher by profession but she was a mother by heart, to her biological children, my classmates and me. She was my teacher for two years and taught me Afrikaans and Economic and Management Science (EMS). During these lessons she taught us more than these subjects; she taught us life skills and how to make good life choices. She was a good listener and gave good advice when it was needed.

Mrs R was strict but in such a way that it kept you on your toes and motivated you. When she was upset she would tap her index finger on the desk in front of her saying, "I'll come down on you like a ton of bricks." That never put me off liking the person she was. My favourite thing she'd say to a learner when they asked a question that had multiple answers was, "Whatever tickles your fancy my baby" or "Whatever floats your boat". I came to know Mrs R as a hardworking and focussed mother and professional. She inspired and motivated me because being at boarding school was difficult. Not only did she open her heart to me and my friends but also her home and her family.

Her motherly love inspired and motivated me to be the best that I could be. She showed me that I had potential. I spent many weekends at her house with her family. Her home became my home and I attended Sunday masses with her family. My fondest memories of being part of the Raijmakers family were Friday or Sunday afternoons when the children came from visiting Néma (their granny) and they would tumble through the doorway and ask, "Mommy, are the girls here yet?" And so the fun began — from watching movies and playing cricket to jumping or relaxing on the trampoline.

What I admired and respected about Mrs R was that she was honest, sarcastic (something I dearly miss), down to earth and she recognised her own faults and apologised when necessary. She always called everyone in class her babies.

She was a determined woman who cared about the well-being of her learners. Teaching was her passion. A fire burnt in her eyes every time she came to teach a class. She dedicated all of her time to school life and went beyond her call of duty. She helped us with more than academics, for example, even though Mrs R did not teach at my school anymore she still helped my friends and me with Matric dance arrangements.

Many teachers have inspired me to become a teacher due to their work ethic; how they carried themselves and just the way you felt their passion for teaching. Their wise and encouraging words motivated and encouraged me to want to bring about a similar change in the lives of children as they did for me. Mrs Raijmakers inspired and motivated me the most because she was a teacher that, like the Mathematical term, could be said to be a constant factor. She is still a constant and positive factor in my life. I still turn to her for advice, and I share with her my happy and sad moments, my achievements and failures, and my ups and downs.

Mrs R, "We may not remember everything you said but we will remember how special you made us feel."

**"I'll come  
down on  
you like  
a ton of  
bricks"**



**A TRIBUTE TO MR MSUTHU MOFOKENG,  
ECD PRACTITIONER AND FATHER,  
FROM MPHOS MOSS**

**M**any would think a mentor teacher would be a school teacher that has taught you phonics, life skills and how to keep fit in physical education. Mine is different and from the title you may have already figured out that it is my father. Msuthu Mofokeng, a proud father of three daughters, a grandfather to six, the eldest out of eight children and an educated man.

My father has not only taught me the value of family, culture and the importance of our community. He has taught me how to make an opportunity out of every little thing that comes my way. He has taught me to be strong and break the stereotypical mould of being a woman. He has taught me the importance of planting a seed in our little ones (learners, that is) and giving them the best education possible through determination, dedication and resilience.

Because of that, today I am a step closer to becoming the best teacher that I can be. Because of that, I am a woman who drives almost anything given to her because my father taught me that everyone is capable. Today I dream about businesses that I would like to run besides my teaching career because I see every opportunity to have a better life.

The list of what I have learnt is endless and some may say I am bragging a little, but what I have said about Mr Mofokeng so far is just a single raindrop in an ocean. If that isn't clear enough then let me say it is a needle in a haystack. I truly appreciate and thank God for blessing me with such a creature, my mother couldn't have chosen a better husband (thanks mom). *Tata*, I thank you, *enkosi*, *ngiyabonga*, *ke a leboha*. Thank you for never giving up on me even when I felt the world crumbling. Thank you for always being there. I am no perfect child but your lessons, faith in me and trust does not go unnoticed.

Msuthu Mofokeng is my father's clan name, but the name my father and mentor goes by is Thuso Michael Moss. Mentor, teacher, father, he is also an ECD level 5 facilitator, an Honours graduate and soon-to-be Masters. He is my true motivation.



# **My Mentor, My Teacher, My Father**



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS MCUBA, NTSIKA SECONDARY SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM SISONKE MVEMVE**

**B**efore Grade 10 I had not been introduced to Mrs Mcuba yet I had always admired her from a distance. I remember eagerly waiting in January 2011 for the Grade 10 class teachers to be announced, I was praying to be placed in her classroom. The list was up and there was my name under Grade 10A. Finally I got to be formally introduced to her. There was a way she conducted herself that gained the respect of others. She was soft spoken and understanding, and I always felt like I could relate to her.

Our relationship grew when I was elected as one of the class representatives, we clicked as though we had known each other for a long time. I had gained a mother in school, someone who cared for me as my mother did at home. She could see through the acts and covers I put up, she could pick up when something was wrong with me. She would say, "*Mvemve urayti?*", meaning "Are you okay?", and I would dismiss her by saying I was fine even though I knew she saw through it. She would just remind me that I knew where she was when I was ready to talk. It meant everything to me to have someone who noticed me and cared for me, someone I knew had my back.

Mrs Mcuba believed in me even when I had stopped believing in myself; she would always encourage me to become the best I could be. In every report under the teacher's comment section I would find "Well done Sisonke, keep reaching for the stars" and when I did not do so well she would comment "I know you can do better than this, the stars are waiting". Seeing her comments always uplifted me, they pushed me to always aspire to be my best.

In my final year of school I went through a depression, I had lost so many loved ones that I just did not see the point of living. I put no effort into anything I did, my school marks dropped and everything in my life felt like it was going sideways. I felt like I was drowning each day. Mrs Mcuba called and asked how I was. As usual, I said I was fine, and her response was "you are bigger than it all, whatever it is, you can get through it". Those words awoke something in me. I realised the huge part she had played in my life, she had tirelessly carried me through my high school years.

Mrs Mcuba's passion for learners and teaching ignited a spark in me and made me want to follow in her footsteps and become a teacher too. She helped me to see teaching as more than coming to school to teach and going home. For her, it was purpose-filled and her teachings and values instilled in the classroom were unforgettable. Her personality, her values, her way of teaching inspired me to be a teacher and change lives.

I would like to thank you *Nxonxo*; you did more for me than you could ever realise, without you caring for me and loving me I would not be where I am today. I never felt alone at school as I knew you were always by my side, cheering for me, and you had my best interests at heart. I may have seemed ungrateful at times, but I always appreciated you. I aspire to be a woman of your calibre, beautiful inside and out, sophisticated and warm. May you continue to touch more lives as you did mine, and be a mother to other children as well. I love you.

# I will always keep reaching for the stars



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS MABASA, SUNNYSIDE PRIMARY  
SCHOOL, PRETORIA, GAUTENG,  
FROM SOMILA SKEPE**

**M**rs Mabasa – a friend, a mother but most importantly a teacher! No words could describe the love and the courage she has shown me. Mrs Mabasa, my Grade 7 teacher, was not just a teacher to me but a mother and a role model. Although I only just had a year with her, she made me feel loved and taught me morals and values that I still hold as I enter adulthood and further my studies to become an educator.

In 2004, I started my primary school at Sunnyside Primary School where I schooled from Grade 1 till Grade 7. In Grade 6 things started to change and people started to change, and I found myself no longer enjoying school. Peers saw each other differently as they grew up and my confidence and self esteem took a knock. I faced quite a lot of emotional bullying by friends and peers and I did not know how to open up to my mom about the issue. In 2010 I was promoted to Grade 7 and that's where I met the woman who would change my view on self-love and confidence.

Mrs Mabasa was my Social Science teacher. When I first met her, she was definitely not impressed with my actions. On our first day she was not in her classroom and we had to wait next to our assigned chairs. By sheer luck I was assigned a seat right next to her table and, as a wondering child, I took a peek at her desk while waiting for her to enter the room. Although I was in the wrong, she smiled at me and reprimanded me in a manner that made me realise that I was definitely in the wrong. She was always the sarcastic type and that's one thing I actually loved about her, she had a good sense humour. She was definitely strict, loved the rules and always emphasised the importance of respect. Of her many qualities, there is one that stuck with me, and that is the love she carried within her and shared with everyone, especially us learners. Yes, she taught us how important education is and how far it would take us in life, but she emphasised the fact that education is also not all about the books, but about life as well. She was the first teacher to notice my need to talk to someone and regain my confidence as a person who will venture into the world. She always came to me with motivational talks about being a person who holds her own beauty and self-love. When I was called ugly, fat and other nasty names by a boy and his friends in my grade, she was there as I cried my eyes out. I was once in a fight with a girl and I could see the disappointment in her eyes, but she never gave up on me and made me realise that I was the captain of how my life would be. She showed me love that any mother would show to her child.

Her unconditional love showed me how to also love those around me with the same respect. Although I suffered quite a lot of emotional bullying from peers, I had a pillar of strength who remained with me and taught me the self-love that I needed. Today I am in varsity and her teachings are still part of me and I will definitely pass these on to my learners. In a place that has individuals of different cultures and identities, I have remembered to accept people as they are and allow myself the same respect and love I was taught to give regardless of the situation. This is why I still hold Mrs Mabasa's teachings at heart.

I will always remember the love that Mrs Mabasa showed me and the passion she had for teaching. She was the role model who entered my life and changed it through her love. In my high school years I made the decision that I wanted to become an educator, I believe that I can give my love to children who need to be reminded that they are loved, no matter what.



# Her love dawned on me



**A TRIBUTE TO MR JODO, ST TERESA SENIOR  
SECONDARY SCHOOL, STERKSPRUIT, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM PHOZISWA NDUMNDUM**

**M**r Jodo is a principal at St Teresa Secondary School. He is also a History teacher, a pastor and a father. Most learners refer to Mr Jodo as Baba because he is a father figure and he always had a big, warm smile. One thing learners won't forget about him is his loud voice, which was even less forgettable because of the motivational speeches he gave us every morning in assembly. I carried some of Mr Jodo's motivational speeches with me throughout my university years. His words "*uze wedwa mntanam*" (you are on your own) helped me to survive university.

Every time I have failed, whether academically or in life in general, Mr Jodo's quotes have crossed my mind. Principal Jodo had a special way of describing a failure. According to Mr Jodo, failing is a catalyst to awaken the mind. Whenever I feel like giving up, such as in my third year when I needed to write a supplementary for the first time, I think of Mr Jodo explaining how "failure can be your friend" and so I persevere. I studied so hard to pass that supplementary exam. Even though one of my friends also wrote that exam, I knew that my efforts depended on me alone. Deep down in my heart I knew that "*ndize ndodwa*" (I am on my own), which is another of Mr Jodo's statements that has stuck with me.

He is my role model and I chose teaching because I experienced firsthand how Mr Jodo touches the lives of learners every day. Even though we were not all academically successful, he taught all of us how to live life and how to handle ourselves; he would say, "*kuyinkosi ukuzazi*" (it's powerful to know yourself). The result was that when I got to varsity, even though there were many new ways of being to choose from, I was certain about who I was and what I wanted in life. I have made choices that my friends would not agree with but, as Mr Jodo would say, "*zizakubidisa iichomi mntanam*" (friends will lead you astray). I have lived my experiences and I survived, thank to Mr Jodo's advice.

We would find it annoying when Mr Jodo repeatedly warned us to flee from sexual immorality, but when I fell pregnant in my first year I realised why he had warned us. There was nothing I could change, it was too late to return to a time when I was only responsible for myself.

As I mature, Mr Jodo's words make more and more sense to me; there are so many changes that have come into my life and I keep telling myself, "*kutsintsile ukudla eplayitini*" (things have changed).

Thank you, Mr Jodo, for your wise advice.

# Teacher, Pastor, Father ... motivator



# Believing in all children

*A TRIBUTE TO MRS N KOLO, RICHARD VARHA SECONDARY SCHOOL, KING WILLIAM'S TOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM NESTA MOYO*

**M**iss N Kolo was a big lady with an hourglass figure; she had amazing hips, afro hair and light-brown skin. She taught me from Grade 9 to Grade 12 at Richard Varha Secondary School. Located in Dimbaza Township, the school had poor and insufficient resources such as stationery, infrastructure, playgrounds and motivational speakers.

She was a mother; a greatly approachable, polite, accessible and inspiring teacher. She had love for children and always had a smile on her face. The kind of smile that gives hope, a reason to live and makes you forget all your problems and loneliness. What I really liked about her was that she never gave up on children, even if other teachers had. She always had higher expectations and faith in learners. She did not compare learners but treated everyone equally. To sum it all up, she believed in all learners, no matter their differences. If a learner did not do well on a certain test she would call that learner aside and have a talk with them to find the problem and help resolve it.

She was willing to serve others and found joy in seeing them happy. When I was in Grade 12 our principal and the other teachers warned us that we were a mischievous and misbehaving class. All the teachers who taught us were complaining and held a meeting about our problem class. We were shouted at and compared to other classes, they were disappointed and had lowered their former high expectations of us. What confused me was that most of the learners who passed with good marks were in my class. I did not like that we were all shouted at because of a few mischievous individuals who did not care how their behaviour hurt others. Miss Kolo comforted and motivated us, saying that we should not feel down or ashamed because of a few who like getting others into trouble.

Miss Kolo encouraged me to have confidence in myself and even gave me a chapter to teach in class one day. That was her way of showing me that I have the potential to be a teacher and motivate others to do well.

She also told me that I should be careful in the decisions that I make for myself and that I should always know that it is normal to be different from other people. As I was a quiet and shy person, I never thought I could teach but, through her, I was able to overcome that. She explained that each person is different for a reason and that we should not compare ourselves to others.

Miss Kolo taught us to love each other as sisters and brothers and treat each other with respect. These morals and values have been instilled in me and now I am applying them in my teaching career and life in general. Your faith in me is appreciated Miss Kolo, thank you.



A million-dollar  
soul who sees  
**potential** in  
**everyone**



*A TRIBUTE TO MRS ROZ OLIVER, PORT ALFRED CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SCHOOL, PORT ALFRED, EASTERN CAPE, FROM ANESIPHO JALI*

**A**unty Roz was an English woman who had short, black hair detailed with a little bit of grey. With a small chin and a long nose, her chubby cheeks always made her look like she was smiling. She had beautiful eyes set in her oval face and you would never find her without her glasses.

She was passionate about her job as a teacher, which led her to open a school in her beautiful house where she welcomed us. She provided a harmonious and pleasant environment that was conducive to learning. She had created a space for us within her home where each learner had their own working station consisting of a chair and two flags. We used the South African flag to get permission to go and visit the bathroom or to signal that we were finished with our work. The other flag was the American flag which was used for getting assistance from her when we needed help with our work. The school followed a Christian ethos that supported a belief that each learner had their own learning pace and did things according to their own abilities. The school's academic programme was not based on CAPS as it was a private school. The school catered for learners from Grade 1 until Grade 12 with not more than 20 learners all together. Aunty Roz supported all of us as we learnt the work required for our grades.

The reason I chose Aunty Roz as my best teacher is because she believed in everyone. In our school we had learners with disabilities but she accommodated everyone and always believed that we all could do it. When I was struggling with Mathematics in Grade 11 and felt like giving up, she told me I could not give up now after I had come so far and reminded me of the bible verse that says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". "I have been your right hand and I will never drop you now," she said. "If it means I need to do this same chapter with you for the whole month, I will do that, but we are not about to quit. Take your time, work at your own pace."

She believed in all of us and it changed my life knowing that there are people out there who still have faith in other people's abilities and are willing to influence the lives of others. This played such a vital role in my growth that I wanted to become a teacher myself and to do for others what Aunty Roz had done for us. I want to influence learners and give them the support and trust I received from Aunty Roz.

Aunty Roz, I would like to thank you for your patience, love, support and the care you have given me. I promise that I will be the Aunty Roz in my generation and hopefully more than that. You have played a vital role in my life and changed it for the better. If I could choose schools again I would certainly go back to yours.

# Aunty Roz; we are **not** about to **quit**



**A TRIBUTE TO MR MNYAMANA, MNXESHA PRIMARY SCHOOL, DIMBAZA, EASTERN CAPE, FROM ANATHI MBALULA**

**M**r Mnyamana was my Grade 6 teacher. He taught us Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology. At the school he was also the person to go to for sports such as cricket and baseball. He had a demeanour that commanded respect. At first glance he seemed daunting, but that is how he looked when he was silent. He was a tall man with a husky voice. He liked the “German” haircut and it was always neatly done.

Mnxesha Primary School had limited resources and Mr Mnyamana was one of only a few male teachers. The classrooms were crowded with learners from all around the township because the school was considered the best in the location. The township was characterised by unemployment and crime, and in the midst of this the school drew learners from all types of backgrounds.

Mr Mnyamana liked the subjects he taught and was good at them, especially Mathematics. He was considered an expert at the school because other teachers would come to him for advice. He taught both Grades 6 and 7, and his learners excelled in Mathematics. He was the first teacher to arrive in the morning and he always held morning classes for Grade 6 and 7 simultaneously. He would easily monitor both classes by giving one group work while he attended to the other group. These morning lessons would be on Mathematics or Natural Sciences and were an important tool to further explain concepts we had struggled to understand.

He was a very strict teacher when it came to discipline issues and he did not tolerate late comers. When he disapproved of our actions, his silence and facial expressions were enough to intimidate us and to reprimand bad behaviour. If the class was noisy he would say, “An empty vessel makes the most noise” and then explain to us what he meant by that. He would tell us that we are smart and so we should not behave like we have nothing to offer the world. He would also tell us that, by being at school, we had taken one step towards fighting poverty and we should not waste the opportunity to learn by making noise or misbehaving. This resonated with most of us because everyone wanted to change the community rather than resort to crime or sit with nothing to do. This led to learners looking to him for activities during free periods.

His teaching method was different from other teachers we encountered. He would ask us what we knew about a topic before teaching it. While teaching us about the *agents of pollination* he asked me to define the word *agent*; he said, “As a class leader, lead us into this topic by defining *agent*”. It took me by surprise because it was the first time I had encountered that word at school. After my explanation, he added onto it and that is how he started every lesson. He made sure we brought what we knew into the classroom so that we found relevance in the things we were learning. He also made sure we had practical examples. For example, when he taught us about kilometres he tasked us to look at the road signs when travelling. He also made sure that when we approached a topic there was a way that we could apply it. For instance, we made a garden for the school so he could show us how we could combine what we learnt in Natural Science about plants with what we learnt in Mathematics about measurement. From his lessons in class my love for Maths and Science grew.

I would not be here if it was not for Mr Mnyamana. He did not only contribute to our academics but he made sure he groomed us for life outside the classroom. He taught me the value of knowing your learners’ strengths and weaknesses and to motivate them regardless. His job did not end at the ring of the school bell but it continued beyond school. He did this by building a relationship with our parents. For me, personally, the responsibilities he gave me at school and the recognition was motivation enough for me to aspire to one day step into his shoes.



He  
groomed  
us for  
life!



**A TRIBUTE TO MR LIXOLILE LIVINGSTONE NJONTINI,  
KWEBULANA JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, TSOMO,  
EASTERN CAPE, FROM MFANELO BOMOYI**

**M**y best teacher is Mr Lixolile Livingstone Njontini, he was my principal and class teacher in Grade 9 at Kwebulana Junior Secondary School. He was dark in complexion and short in height, he had a white beard and wore his reading glasses on the tip of his nose. He always wore suits and kept a red pen in his pocket. The school, consisting of 10 overcrowded classrooms, is situated in Tsomo in a rural area called Kwebulana. It is here that an icon changed my way of doing things.

Mr Njontini would not allow learners' dreams to perish, he was always there for everyone and played the role of teacher and parent at the same time. He was intelligent and played a pivotal role in shaping my future; he is my role model still today. He treated all of his learners equally and the other members of staff really respected him.

As our class teacher in Grade 9, he would tell us about the importance of education and respect. Nothing was more important to him than teaching and I do not remember a day that he missed his teaching period. His priority was to equip learners for the future. I was not the smartest one in class, but he never gave up on me, he pushed me to study and work hard.

When he motivated you, he would not smile, and his words showed that he was serious. One day I was late for school and he had the first period. He chased me out and told me to come back the next day. I was angry at the time and did not understand why he sent me back home. The next day I arrived at school early and he called me to the verandah — he called everyone *rhaqalala* or *nogambutsana* — and explained that he had chased me away because he wanted to make me more serious about time. He told me that time is very important in life; if you cannot be on time you will not be able to structure your future. That day my eyes were opened and I began to respect time and manage it better.

Mr Njontini taught us English first additional language and Natural Science but he was a dedicated teacher and could teach any of the nine subjects if he needed to. We called him *titshala omkhulu*. During break we would play on the sports grounds, when the bell rang he would come out of the office and shout *amarhaqalala eklasini* and then he would chase us around the sports grounds. I have never seen an old man running like that!

As a future teacher, I promise to follow in his footsteps in taking education to the next level. I want to touch the hearts of the future generation, I want to continue where Mr Njontini left off, I want to build other teachers as he did, I want to be a father figure to learners as he was. I want to be a motivator and mentor for others as he was to me.

# An icon that touches the hearts of his learners



# The inspirational teacher

*A TRIBUTE TO MRS STAMPER, NOMZAMO SECONDARY SCHOOL, PORT ALFRED, EASTERN CAPE, FROM AVIWE DIKWENI*

**W**ords could never be enough to describe how phenomenal Mrs Stamper was to me during my high-school years. She is a woman with a calm spirit, warm heart and a listening ear for all and she continues to make an impact on my life today.

Mrs Stamper was my English and Life Orientation teacher from Grade 10 till Grade 12. She demonstrated great content knowledge throughout her lessons and gave well-prepared and well-researched lessons that were interesting and relevant to our socioeconomic issues. Her activities in class allowed for active participation and engagement. She used creative and fun strategies to explain important or difficult concepts.

She had a beautifully decorated classroom. The walls were filled with inspirational poetry and motivational quotes. She also displayed the writings of emerging writers from the previous grades and years she had taught. Her bold personality filled the room. The moment you entered her classroom, you felt at ease, as if a heavy burden was removed from your shoulders.

For most of us, Mrs Stamper's classroom was not only a room for teaching and learning to take place. It was also a counselling centre. It was a place where we felt comfortable enough to share with her our troubles and distresses. She would always offer a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on; she had empathy and she gave the best advice ever!

I still remember how reserved I was when I first met her. I did not want to contribute to class discussions or participate in any activity that required me to speak in class. Mrs Stamper would always pick on me, intentionally, and she would give me that reassuring look, as if she was saying, "You can do it". And when I asked her "why me," she would politely, with a warm smile on her face, ask "why not you?" She forced me to break free from the little box I had created for myself. She saw potential in me and she helped me when I doubted myself. She was always sure I could do tasks, assignments and extra-mural activities I thought I could not do.

Mrs Stamper helped me realise that there's more to me than I ever knew existed. She became my mentor both academically and spiritually; someone who I consulted before taking major decisions in my life. She always encouraged me to reach far beyond the stars, because the stars are only the beginning. She was patient and allowed me to make mistakes, always stressing the importance of learning from those mistakes. Speaking to her is still therapeutic for me, as I still have a really strong bond with her.

Our relationship grew beyond the classroom. In my Matric year, she helped me with my application forms and fees and went all out to ensure I got into university. She encouraged me to study hard, remain focused and, most importantly, never forget where I come from and what my purpose is. Her words helped me to stay grounded and absorbed in university.

Mrs Stamper, thank you so much for your heart. Thank you for believing in me and my abilities. I am forever grateful for the time and energy you invested in ensuring I became the woman I am today. Your love, effort and kindness will always be in my heart. Your passion and dedication to teaching is something out of this world. Thank you for being an exceptional teacher!



**She helped  
me discover  
new things  
about myself**



***A TRIBUTE TO MRS MATYUMZA, KAYAMANDI HIGH SCHOOL, STELLENBOSCH, WESTERN CAPE, FROM INDIPHILE NTLANGA***

**S**he was the most beautiful woman in the entire world, and she had a smile that made us feel safe. Her laughter tickled everyone in the classroom because it sounded like the most beautiful song we had ever heard. She was dressed stylishly in high heels and looked gorgeous every day. Her hands were soft, with her wedding ring shining on her left hand. She was as beautiful inside as she was on the outside. She was the most honest teacher, and patient with her learners.

Kayamandi High School is in the Western Cape, in Stellenbosch town. It is found in the black-dominated area in the township called Kayamandi. The school is an isiXhosa medium school but its language of instruction is English. The school specialises in Science.

Mrs Matyumza was my class teacher from Grade 10 until Matric. She was the most caring teacher out of all teachers that I met during my school years.

Mrs Matyumza falls into the category of not only being a good teacher but also my best teacher. She was an inspirational teacher and, because of her enthusiasm, inspired me to a career in teaching too. She was always patient, loved her work and cared for her learners. She inspired me to do good and be as beautiful as she was. She was always happy and caring, asking each of us what we wanted to be when we grew up. She was an amazing teacher. She never labelled us, she treated us equally.

She would teach in a way that the lesson would last in your memory for a long time and she had a way of bringing our attention to the lesson even if we were distracted. When she was unhappy with us she would use her best loud voice and we would laugh because we were not used to her being loud. Most learners would work hard and do their best to prevent that from happening because we hated it when she was forced to use her loud voice.

During register period, she would take a moment and encourage us to be better people; inspiring us to do better in school and to pull up our socks because she believed in us. She saw potential that we didn't see in ourselves. I have so much respect for her, every girl in the school wanted to be like her because she was so unique.

She had it all together and her career was on point. And she deserved all the praises as her learners passed with flying colours, in all the subjects she taught.

I will never forget the love and the encouragement I received from you, Mrs Matyumza. You are everything that I look up to. I thank you for choosing to teach at Kayamandi High School so that I could meet you. I will always try my best to be a good teacher like you were to me. Thank you so much.

We live in the country where teaching is not recognised or appreciated, I never thought that I would be a teacher, until I met Mrs Matyumza. She changed my life because all I needed was an understanding and patient teacher who would believe in me. She was that, she gave me all her best and I passed my school work. She inspired me to be good teacher, she made me realise that teaching was my calling. All I could dream of is to be a great teacher like Mrs Matyumza.

# My teacher, my hero



**A TRIBUTE TO MR TELILE, KHANYA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, MOUNT FLETCHER, EASTERN CAPE, FROM LINDOKUHLE MDLADLAMBA**

**S**chool was never my favourite place, especially in primary school because I thought nothing interesting happened and so I told myself that school sucked. Things changed when I got to high school; this is where I began to notice my abilities. Even though I passed all my previous grades at primary school, I never considered that an achievement. Then I met Mr Telile who made me realise that everybody is special and has amazing potential. It just depends on how much opportunity you have to be exposed to your potential.

Khanya Senior Secondary School is situated in rural Mount Fletcher far from the residential community, although a few new houses have been built close to the school in the past few years. The school is on quintile two because it is necessary to pay your school fees if you want to remain in the school. The buildings are in a good condition but there is no library and no computers, which is understandable because there is no electricity in the area. It would be pointless to have things like a science lab and computers.

Mr Telile was a motivational speaker, even though I might not remember the lines he spoke, he always made sure we felt comfortable in his class without us forgetting our manners and remembering to behave respectfully as learners. He was well respected in the school because he did not tolerate nonsense while showing respect for his learners too. He would tell us that respect is a two-way street because you have to respect other people in order for them to respect you; whatever their age, ability or colour, respect should always remain among people.

Mr Telile was a short guy, proudly Sotho and always punctual. He'd say, "Time waits for no man" and learners who were late for his class would be punished. The punishments were simple and fair because one was supposed to answer a few questions to be forgiven. However, if one failed to do that, the class would decide what kind of punishment you deserved.

Mr Telile was an Agricultural Science teacher and I fell in love with the subject because it is relevant to our lives; we could see most of the things he taught with our own eyes and Mr Telile made sure he provided us with all the information we needed. Even though we did not have a laboratory, he tried his best. Once we slaughtered a chicken for an experiment and we all had a chance to see and label the organs that were taught in theory. He was a hard worker and went beyond the call of duty to teach us. I believe that, wherever he is now, he continues with this wonderful work.

Thank you Mr Telile for inspiring me to always see the opportunities in life. You are the one who inspired me to stop playing and laughing all the time in class and focus on important things such as your lessons. Most of us know a bit about cows and plants, but you gave us more information about them such as the costs and potential income to be gained from agriculture. This is the kind of information that we will need when we farm our own land. Thank you sir, *ugqatso lwakho ulufezile*.



**"Time  
waits for  
no man"**



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS NOMAZWI BALURA, KUYASA  
COMBINED SCHOOL, PORT ALFRED, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM SONGEZIWE PHILLIP**

**G**ood-natured, caring, loving, supportive, friendly, passionate, gentle; these are but few words to describe her. Beyond the class itself Mrs Balura was known for being there for anyone, not just me. She was the kind of teacher you could open to and she would listen, comfort and advise.

Mrs Balura taught me from Grade 8 to Grade 12. However, she was the teacher who had inspired me since primary school. I used to see her around school and there was something about her that grabbed my attention from a young age. She then became my older sister's class teacher and I would visit my sister every day just to see Mrs Balura's smiling face filled with love.

High school was dreadful and filled with drama and teenage problems. She was there for me, she gave me advice and offered me her wisdom and understanding of the teenage world. She was not limited to one subject, she did her job beyond what was necessary and taught me more than isiXhosa and Life Orientation.

Her class was neat and motivating and, because of her, school was a great place where we all felt loved and cared for. She had a voice that compelled us to listen, and I wished to have her all day, everyday in class. During her Life Orientation classes she would tell us stories, her personal stories and experiences in life, and these stories motivated and assured me that no matter what I was going through or still had to go through, all of it would pass.

The journey with Mrs Balura was wonderful. She was a likeable person whose personality, warm character and passion for teaching endeared her to learners and colleagues alike. My fondest memory is of bumping into her in a parking area at the mall on the day of our Matric dance. She greeted me with a smile and said she was going to call me but, since I was right in front of her, she asked me to make a speech at our Matric dance. I was overwhelmed, but the short notice gave me confidence and showed me that she believed in me and I did not want to disappoint her.

Mrs Balura taught me to meet every frown with a genuine smile, she was an amazing and inspiring teacher. She taught me how to study, she taught me to love books. She encouraged me to believe in myself and my abilities. She taught me five words that I have used to overcome seemingly impossible situations, and I can honestly attest to the motto "I will be someone someday". Whenever I lose hope I start off my day with this motto. I have come realise the power in those words and that, ultimately, I control my destiny. Today I am where I am because of her inspiration.

Mrs Balura always treated learners with respect and a caring attitude, she presented herself in class and before the whole school as a 'real person' and spent time working with small groups of learners throughout the day. She provided a variety of opportunities for learners to apply and use knowledge and skills in different learning situations. She inspired me to pursue my dream to teach because of the great teacher she was.

How do I thank her? High school goes by so fast and we almost forget that the people at school won't be in our lives forever. Mrs Balura was placed in my life for a reason. She inspired me, she helped me to decide what career path to choose. Maybe I will see her one day when I graduate from university. Maybe then I will be able to find the words to thank her. Even if I don't, she will probably understand, she always did.

Thank you Mrs Balura. You have inspired me to become great.

# Her love inspired me



# Going beyond the call of duty

*A TRIBUTE TO MRS BABU, VICTORIA GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM AVUMA NDLOLE*

**F**or me, teachers are like parents, most of the time they imitate what our parents do at home. This is how relationships are built between learners and teachers.

It was during Grade 9 in high school that I met Mrs Babu. For most of us, high school is where we make the choices that will influence our futures. It is a stage where we learn and grow. I was fortunate enough to be in Mrs Babu's class because she guided me with both academics and personal choices. She was reasonable and straightforward. One was able to talk with her about anything, and I mean anything. She was so good with words that she was able to make us confess and speak out about our problems. Above all, she had a warm heart and gave warm hugs on the most difficult days. With her I knew that my problems were safe and resolved.

The appearance of Mrs Babu reminded me of my own mother. She was not fancy or stylish but she was presentable at all times. She wore a smile, always. Her beautiful character was her standout feature and that, for me, was the highlight about her and I came to understand the famous line "Don't judge a book by its cover".

Her own favourite line was "without Geometry, life is pointless". You would know by this that she was a Mathematics teacher, and she was good at it. Learners would sit on top of each other's laps just to be in her class. Her teaching style was amazing and it encouraged learners to enjoy and excel in her subject. Her class was about discussing and understanding content first and then she would go into the mathematical part. There was no favouritism in her class and she gave every learner an equal and fair chance to be excellent and improve at their own pace.

Now when I look back, I realise that it is such teachers who comforted and motivated me to be a better person. It is such teachers who encouraged me to not settle for less and to develop a passion for whatever I find myself doing. It is such teachers who took care of me where my parents could not reach me and when I needed to be heard the most. Now I know that this teacher not only taught me the curriculum, she also prepared me for the real world. She taught me life lessons that have kept me going until today. She gave me a special lesson that many fail to give. A gift that we cannot buy with money, and something that I will cherish forever.

Thank you Mrs Babu for all your efforts and going beyond the call of duty to groom learners and to prepare us to become our best.



**A thousand days of  
diligent study is  
one day with a  
great  
teacher**



**A TRIBUTE TO MS ATTERIDGE, PORT ALFRED HIGH SCHOOL, PORT ALFRED, EASTERN CAPE, FROM CHANDRE FIELIES**

**P**ort Alfred High School, a school of excellence, not just academically, but socially. Set in great beauty beside the ocean, it is a well-resourced school with great support from the community. I believe that it is equipped with teachers who strive for excellence. These are teachers who go beyond the call of duty. A perfect example is Ms Atteridge.

Ms Atteridge was my Business Studies teacher, a business minded woman with knowledge of stocks and shares that meant she also conducted her own private business affairs. She was inspirational and encouraged me to aim high, work hard and stay humble, because humility meant everything to her.

She was a ball of energy that brightened up my day. When I first met Ms Atteridge, I noticed she had a really soft voice and she liked wearing colourful beaded bracelets and necklaces. Her classroom stood out from the others because she attached inspirational quotes to the door. That was one of the reasons why I was so excited to go to her class; I would always read a quote or two before entering.

I was the only Afrikaans learner in her classroom. When I realised that, fear consumed me. I felt like an outsider in a class that consisted of about 60 learners. However, despite the fears and emotions I felt, Ms Atteridge made me feel as though I was part of a family that disregarded any differences. I started to believe that I belonged in that class. Ms Atteridge was the only teacher who could do this.

Ms Atteridge always had a smile on her face, no matter how the day was. When I walked down the corridors she would always greet me with a smile that automatically made me smile every day. This was one of the reasons why I didn't want to leave her class, however, it was not the only reason.

She was indeed a master at teaching her subject, a craftsman in her own way. I had a misconception about Business Studies; I thought that it was all about Maths and Accounting, a dreadful situation. However, with Ms Atteridge teaching it was more than just frightful subjects. She always accompanied the content with storytelling. Listening to her stories was entertaining and it made me more interested in the content. "Thinking outside the box" was an expression that she believed in and she always said that Business Studies was just that. She encouraged and pushed me to do better whenever I struggled with any of the content. She really cared.

Ms Atteridge was always concerned about her learners, like a hen concerned about her chicks. Failure was not an option, if success was where we were headed, she'd wait for us to catch up. She made sure that every learner understood the work. Ms Atteridge even made notes for us out of our own textbooks, however, she also encouraged us to read a chapter a day because she might have missed some content. I was grateful for her because she went above and beyond to make Afrikaans notes for me. I knew then and there that she was a very kind teacher with a soft heart.

I remember her crying over something that happened to her. She opened up to us as a class after we asked her what was wrong. I experienced who she really was, right at that moment, a person who would not even hurt a fly. The most amazing thing was that she motivated us through what she had experienced. It felt good because I learned that I should not allow anything to bring me down.

Ms Atteridge used to tell my mother how smart I was whenever she saw her. She was not just interested in knowing me, but in my family too. She kept on asking my mother about my future and she also gave my mother advice for when I reached university.

Give me a chance to write an article about her, give me a chance to write a book about her, still it would never be enough to display her beautiful life and the great impact that she made in mine. I SALUTE HER.

# Phenomenal Woman



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS ELEANOR TAAI, PORT ALFRED  
HIGH SCHOOL, PORT ALFRED, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM SHANAAZ JATTIEM**

**B**eing a teacher is one of the most fulfilling occupations you can find. If you have a passion for children, teaching will not be seen as a job but rather a hobby.

When I think of a teacher who made an impressionable impact on my life, I think of someone who drove me to excel, someone who was approachable and believed in me. Her name is Mrs Eleanor Taai, my Grade 11 and 12 Afrikaans teacher. When my family relocated back to the Eastern Cape from the Free State, I expected an adjustment in schooling but I never anticipated I would shine academically and enjoy school as much as I did. Port Alfred High School, a well resourced ex Model C school, has amazing teachers who push and inspire their learners. I enjoyed school because of the attitudes of teachers and children, the respect between the learners and educators made me realise just how special this school is.

My first week at the school, I thought Mrs Taai was horrible. She gave me my first detention on my second day of school because I did not read the story she asked us to read. Keeping in mind the fact that she gave me my very first detention, I was determined to prove to her that I was a hard worker and that I was committed to pass her subject. In my first Afrikaans test I passed very well and as the year progressed she did not accept anything lower than 80% from me. She pushed me to reach a mark I thought I would never be able to achieve and that year I got a distinction in Afrikaans.

She is one of the best teachers because she never believed in giving up on any of her learners; she always encouraged them to do better. She was approachable, the one teacher we could go to with any problem and you could trust her enough to give you advice or just listen. When we reached Matric she was the teacher who gave us information about universities and how we should apply. She encouraged further education and even went to the lengths of helping us fill in application forms.

She made an impact on my life in the sense that she showed me how a teacher cares for and shows interest in the learners' lives. If I was absent I would get asked why I was not at school and if I was sick she would ask how I was doing. She showed general concern for all her learners and although she had her times when she was strict, it only made us work harder and appreciate her more. I missed my distinction by 1% in my final Matric results, however, she made sure I asked for a remark so that I could receive the distinction I worked so hard to achieve.

I would love to be a teacher like Mrs Taai one day, my learners should feel free to discuss anything with me and I want to encourage learning and encourage them to do better and be better. She is not only my favourite teacher but is a role model as well because of her passion for what she does. She always went beyond the call of duty to help her learners and encourage them. She encouraged me to be a better learner, to always try my best, and one day I would like to be a teacher like her. I want to make an impact on my learners' lives as she has made an impact on mine.

Teachers can make or break learners; they can encourage or dismiss learners' effort. I believe Mrs Taai was one of those teachers who went the extra mile for her learners, she was truly a great teacher.

Thank you Mrs Taai for everything you've done and still do for your learners and the school. Thank you for the tough love and for always pushing us to do better, *juffrou is een in n duisent*.



# A teacher who went the **extra** **mile** for her learners

# Teachers who stood out from the rest of the staff



*A TRIBUTE TO MR NAICKER, MARGATE MIDDLE SCHOOL, MARGATE, KWAZULU-NATAL, FROM FUNEKA MJOLI*

**P**assion is defined as a very strong feeling of love, hatred or enthusiasm. For now, let us take a look at passion being love towards teaching. We all know that love has patience, care and is enthusiastic. I believe that all teachers can teach, they are all able to unfold the mysteries of information to learners. But it takes a passionate teacher to explain in such a way that a learner can visualise what the teacher is saying and to fully assimilate the new information presented.

Margate Middle School is situated in a small town called Margate in KwaZulu-Natal. Initially classes were held in temporary houses but, thanks to the Ugu District Municipality, the school now operates in proper classrooms. This school has 15 teachers who teach learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12, with two classes for each grade. It is recognised as a third quintile school, but is still under construction to be upgraded to a second quintile school. Yes, it is not the best school but so far it has produced fine Umalusi results with a 98% pass rate in 2014. This means every teacher is doing their ultimate best for education. Nonetheless, there's one teacher who portrayed education and teaching at its finest.

Mr Naicker was caring, professional, patient, humble and honest. I will not mention him being passionate, because that was his first name. He was one teacher who would honestly tell us if he did not know the answer to a question we asked. He would not leave the question unanswered but do his best to find the information in his own time, and then report it back to the class.

He always encouraged us to study and, during exam time, he would tell us to "aim for the sky so that if we fall, we land on the stars". In the November of my Grade 12 year he changed his saying to "work like a slave and live like a king, you have the whole month to sleep after exams". The class grumbled with some exclaiming that we have to sleep as we can't write our exams without some sleep. In the end he was right, those who were wise took his advice and achieved excellent results.

He taught me to love Biology. I even thought about becoming a scientist and I might still pursue Biological Sciences after my BEd degree. He would explain in such a way that one could visualise what he was saying. Sometimes he drew on the board to demonstrate. He believed all learners could master each chapter and become proficient Life Science learners. Repetition was one of his anchor strategies. If a learner pleaded with him to repeat, he would do it wholeheartedly. If one still did not understand, he used his break time to explain to that learner. His love and hope for learners to succeed in life made me realise the importance of a teaching career in this world. Many regard it as the lowest career, but the impact that it has in our society is tremendous. Not even one new career professional would awaken without it.

I am here today because of Mr Naicker's great work. If it wasn't for his character and conduct maybe I would not have the zeal that I have about making a difference in another human's life. Cutting from his pattern I believe I will place the seed that he planted in me in someone else. And when that seed has grown, the fruits will be reaped by somebody else who will pass it on as well.

Dear Mr Naicker, thank you for your great work!

## Give your passions your all



**D**uring my primary school years, at a big, well-resourced, all-girls school, Victoria Girls' Primary School, I had the privilege to meet an affectionate, amiable, ambitious and supportive individual. Someone with whom any learner could share their thoughts and she would always listen; someone who was always willing to lend a helping hand and made sure that those around her were coping. This wonderful woman was Miss Loocke.

Miss Loocke had long black hair, she loved wearing black, always dressed appropriately, loved her red lipstick and always maintained a good-looking manicure and pedicure. As a learner, I was fortunate enough to have Miss Loocke as my Grade 5 class teacher, Afrikaans teacher and athletics coach.

As a class teacher and an Afrikaans teacher, Miss Loocke was always well organised, punctual and treated every learner in the school equally. She was a teacher who easily portrayed her enthusiasm about her teaching career. Her classroom was always neat, and well decorated with insightful posters. When Miss Loocke marked our assignments, no matter how poorly one had done, she acknowledged our efforts and gave us friendly advice on how to improve our work. Miss Loocke definitely had a special relationship with both her learners and their parents.

Having Miss Loocke as my athletics coach was a great advantage for me because she always encouraged me to train hard and do my best; she motivated me not only to do athletics as a sport but to break previous athletics records. Miss Loocke's encouragement and motivation helped me break high jump records, as well as long distance records during primary school. With all the motivation and support from both my family and Miss Loocke, in Grade 7, I was elected to coach athletics under Miss Loocke's supervision. During high school, I was granted the opportunity to take part in the Albany Athletics Trials. This was a fun yet challenging experience for me as I competed with other athletes from all over the Eastern Cape. This experience definitely would not have been possible if I hadn't met Miss Loocke at Victoria Girls' Primary School; her continuous words of encouragement and motivation opened so many doors of opportunity in my athletics career.

Miss Loocke also helped me with my studies during Intermediate Phase. As a learner, I experienced difficulty studying for Economic and Management Science (most commonly known as EMS) and Miss Loocke sacrificed a few of her afternoons to introduce me to various methods I could use to ensure that studying for EMS was much simpler. Miss Loocke's time, kindness and generosity were not taken for granted at all and studying for EMS became much easier for me.

Unfortunately, Miss Loocke left Victoria Girls' Primary School and went overseas while I was at Victoria Girls' High School. As a learner who was inspired by her, I was quite sad. However, with all Miss Loocke's positive characteristics as a teacher, I can truly say that she was by far one out of many teachers who really inspired me to become a Foundation Phase teacher. She motivated me to become a well-organised, independent and self-confident individual who is always willing to take on new opportunities.

Here I am today, a Bachelor of Education student at Rhodes University, trying to fulfil my own teaching dream, so that one day I will be able to stand in front of my own classroom, teaching and inspiring young learners. It has always been my dream to become a teacher, to equip the younger generation with the necessary knowledge, so that they too are able to live their dreams in the future.

Two quotes that I personally think best describe Miss Loocke's inspiration in my life, read as follows: "A good teacher is like a candle — it consumes itself to light the way for others" (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) and "A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind and touches a heart."

Miss Loocke has clearly lit the way and touched my heart, from being a young primary school learner, to being a Bachelor of Education student; a future Foundation Phase teacher.

Thank you Miss Loocke for being such a wonderful woman, educator, and instructor.



# Wonderful woman

***A TRIBUTE TO MISS LOOCKE, VICTORIA GIRLS' PRIMARY SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE, FROM JASMIN CELENE JATTIEM***



# “What do you think, Phila?”

**A TRIBUTE TO MR ERIC GULBIS, LEAP SCIENCE AND MATHS SCHOOL, PINELANDS, WESTERN CAPE, FROM PHILASANDE YENGWA**

**W**hat do you think, Phila? Those words still ring in my head when I think of my best teacher, Mr Eric Gulbis. He would constantly ask this shy, 12 year old what she thought the answer to the Mathematics problem was. And she would always answer “I am not sure Sir, but I think ...” Most of the time that thought would be correct or at least have the correct formula, or at times be something he had not even thought about. He seemed to know when she knew the answer, but just could not bring herself to answering. That young girl was me.

Mr Eric was a teacher of Mathematics at LEAP Science and Maths School. He was a tall gentleman with an American accent. He had short, dark hair. He made corny jokes and enjoyed laughing. LEAP School was a well-resourced school, with classes reaching a maximum of 24 learners.

Mr Eric was more than just a Mathematics teacher to me, he was my confidant and he understood me more than I could understand myself. He saw potential and made it clear that he had high expectations of me. This was scary because I had just come from primary school, skipped Grade 8 and did not know much about anything, really. This, however, did not take away the idea he had of me being a bright learner.

I remember the first time he told me he thought I was smart. He called me to his office. I was really scared, because I had a bad association with being called to the teacher’s office. Additionally, I had ‘broken English’. That day, he asked me if I knew what the Mathematics Olympiad was. Who was I to know anything about the Maths Olympiad held at the University of Cape Town? I was only a young girl from the dusty streets of Gugulethu, a place with barely any future for young girls. My answer was no surprise, I knew nothing about the Olympiad, but I knew the University of Cape Town. At the time, it was a dream, miles away from my reality, but he made it seem near and possible. He told me he believed he was looking at a Mathematician and that he thought I could do well at the Olympiad. Then the magical answer followed, ‘What do you think, Phila?’ and like clockwork I answered ‘I do not know Sir, but it could be fun.’

I went to the Olympiad, but I did not make it to the next round. I was disappointed, but he encouraged me and told me there was a chance to try again next time. I tried and did not make it again.

It was not the eagerness that made me try again, but the belief that anything was possible, that maybe I could make it one day. The one other reason was the free trip to the University of Cape Town every year. Thinking about it now, it is funny and childish, but it set me up for life. It introduced me to a life with many possibilities, a big world where I could be anything I wanted to be. That was one of the things that built confidence in me, the trust that anything can happen to me.

I think a lot of times learners are taught to be the best, pressured to get the best marks. But Mr Eric taught me to believe in myself. He taught me how to speak up. He made me believe that what I had to say was important and could change someone’s life. For a long time I wanted to be a mathematician, because I wanted to be just like him. But I realised that he was a teacher and he changed learners’ lives and that is what I wanted to do. So I decided to study to be a teacher and I believed that I could be exactly that.

A lot of my other teachers were not happy with my decision to become a teacher. But Mr Eric supported it. Even when I decided to go study politics at Stellenbosch University, he supported that decision too. When I complained to him a year later about how miserable my course made me feel and asked him what he thought I should do, he asked me “What do you think, Phila?” My answer was “I know what to do Sir.”

I am entirely grateful to that American teacher who came to South Africa and touched my life. He made me believe in myself. He gave me the ability to answer questions with certainty. He made me believe that what I had to say could change someone’s life, it changed my life.



# Love of the subject

**A TRIBUTE TO MR MAZWI, JONGINTABA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, MQHEKEZWENI LOCATION, MTHATHA, EASTERN CAPE, FROM MALUSI NDINCEDE**

**A**fter a long struggle to find a school in Gauteng, I decided to go back home and try my luck there. It was a three-day journey back home, so I arrived after the schools had opened at beginning of the year. I was interviewed by Mr Mazwi and he teased me, asking why I had arrived late at school, did I think I was special? He then sat me down and asked the real reason why I had arrived late, and I told him that I could not find a school in Gauteng. He asked me, if I was accepted, what I would bring that would make them not regret admitting me at Jongintaba Senior Secondary School. I promised him a lot of things because I was desperate at that time, and that helped me because, each time I misbehaved, I would remember the promises I had made.

Our school did not have many resources, we did not have a library but we had a computer lab when I was doing Matric. Mr Mazwi taught us that we did not need those things if we spent as much time as possible reading our books.

Mr Mazwi loved History and made me fall in love with the subject too. I had only a little knowledge about History but the way Mr Mazwi taught made me to want learn more. One would think that Mr Mazwi was there during World War I, the way he described the details of each and every event in the war. That made it easy for us to understand. He made sure that no one in the class was left behind, and he encouraged us to take down notes and then give them to him so that he could check if we were on the right track. He encouraged everyone to love their books and if he saw a learner struggling he would say “*ikhona into ezokothusa*” and everyone knew to pull up their socks. He treated all his learners equally and he believed in everyone. He believed that all learners could do well if they spent time on their books, and he gave us opportunities to discover our strengths and weaknesses.

Mr Mazwi made me look forward to going to school each day. He was the best teacher who made us forget about our troubled backgrounds. He helped me realise that there is more to life and that I could always find a way to better myself, even when others doubted my intelligence and did not think I would make it in life. He was our parent, the one we could talk to about anything. He smiled and made jokes about everything. He had the skill of turning a bad situation into a good one, making us laugh and forget about it. The moment he stepped into class we would start talking until he reminded us that we were in school and we should do what we came to do there.

He loved us, the school and his subject. He was meant to retire in mid 2013 but then said he could not leave us in the middle of the year and stayed on so we could finish the year with him. He knew that it would be a big adjustment for us to get used to a new teacher and maintain our marks in his subject. He wanted to make us and the school proud because we were doing well in History.

*Eyona nto ndiyifundayo kuTitshala uMazwi kukuba uyakwazi ubangumfundisi ntsapho kwaye ukwazi ukubanika ithemba abantwana obafundisayo ngokuthi ubonise uthando kubo bonke, ubonise nokubaxhasa kwimizamo yabo. Imfundiso zakhe zisahleli kum nanamhlanje ngoba ndiyayazi umsebenzi wakhe wayewuthanda kwaye, wayewenza ngempumelelo ngoba yayinto esuka kuye entliziyweni ukuzisa ithemba kuthi sonke.*

I think I will be a better teacher because of the knowledge you shared with us.



## History in detail



**A TRIBUTE TO MRS LAMANI, TEM MRWETYANA  
HIGH SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM SPAMANDLA MDLUNGU**

**T**he best teacher I ever had was Mrs Lamani, my high school Economics teacher from Grades 10 to 12. She was of medium height, had a light-coloured skin and always wore a big smile. Mrs Lamani taught at TEM Mrwetyana Senior Secondary School, a school that was in quintile three and not well resourced.

Because of the love she had for her profession, she inspired me to the extent that I believed that teaching was my calling. She was not an ordinary teacher, Mrs Lamani was an approachable, motivational, loving and motherly teacher.

She was approachable because she cared even about our personal issues. She identified learners with personal problems and was always eager to help. She encouraged us to communicate our concerns even if they were not academic. She was motivational because she taught me about the importance of education. She encouraged me to work hard in every task given at school. I still remember her words "I want all of you to go and further your studies after Grade 12".

She had a characteristic love for her work and profession as an Economics teacher. Her classes were never boring because she loved what she was doing, she had something positive to say every day. She would say, "You must live what you learn from school everywhere you go". By this she meant that everything she taught us we had to practice at school, home and everywhere we went. She loved to see what she taught us being applied and accomplished.

She carried the spirit of humanity in her heart as she always cared about our grievances, social injustices and problems. She made me think deeply about our economy but, most importantly, how to sustain the economy of our country. One of the things she never stopped telling us was to read articles, news and books about the economy and economics. She gave us the love of the subject that no one else could give.

Mrs Lamani gave her best on every task to ensure that her learners gained knowledge and grew academically. When she had to discipline a learner, she would say, "I do not punish you because I hate you, but I punish you because I love you". She explained with patience until the concept or module was clear. She made me fall in love with Economics, I found it so interesting.

The way Mrs Lamani dealt with learners, within the school premises, in the classroom and even outside of school shaped how I thought of teaching and myself. She understood how to deal with learners and treated every learner fairly and equally. It was unusual to see her down, she was always positive.

She created a sense of high self esteem through her actions. She did not believe in impossible cases or problems. Mrs Lamani did not use a loud voice when she spoke, but you would pay attention and understand what she said.

Despite how busy she was, she always cared and attended to every plea and problem. She accommodated every learner in any way she could and that made her a parent and a teacher to us. She worked well with other teachers too. Mrs Lamani was not a Life Orientation teacher, but helped learners because she did not only teach Economics, she taught about life in general, teaching us about respect while treating us with the greatest respect.

You would never hear your problems going around the school, amongst teachers and other learners. This was because Mrs Lamani was trustworthy and would strive to get to know her learners' backgrounds. She had warmer hands than any other teacher; she encouraged learners to speak whenever they faced a challenge, a doubt or needed guidance.

One of the most enjoyable days with Mrs Lamani was when we had a school leisure trip to Port Alfred. I will always be grateful for her positive influence in my life.

She had a  
love for her  
profession  
and lived  
her calling



**A TRIBUTE TO MR BABU, NTABA MARIA PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM LUTHO SINGATA**

**A**s I was going through my old school books, I came across my Grade 9 Mathematics book. Written on the front of the old hardcover book was a quote: "Going to bed without practising Maths is a sin". These were motivating words that Mr Babu spoke and I wrote them down where I would see them clearly. Mr Babu was my Grade 9 Maths teacher. He was from India but lived in Grahamstown, South Africa. He was well known for his Mathematics skills and, of course, his former learners would remember him for his punishments.

Mr Babu was an inspiring and interesting human being and was one of the reasons my Maths was good throughout high school. He would come up with many funny but productive jokes about Maths, which made his lessons more interesting. His trousers were likely to be right above his ankles, and I would see his socks. Looking at his socks became one of my habits because most of them were happy socks on which were written the days of the week; on Monday he would wear his "Monday" socks, which I thought was pretty cool. When he walked into the classroom the whole class would stand up with our homework books on our desks and remain quiet. We would wait until he had walked around the classroom to see whether everyone had done the homework or not. He produced a good mathematician out of me, therefore, in him I see the qualities of a productive teacher.

When I was still an Ntaba Maria learner, he was the Deputy Principal. I was often late for school and he would shout at me, or sarcastically laugh at me, and this was followed by a punishment. Everyone who paid attention to his lessons would pass Maths very well and I am proud to say that I was one of them. Out of the school full of skilled and dedicated teachers, he was my best teacher because, to him, failing was not an option. Although his punishments could be harsh when a learner had broken the rules, that did not stop him from being a kind person and doing an extraordinary job in his teaching.

Not only was he a good Maths teacher, Mr Babu was also the school's rugby coach. He would give our rugby side a motivating speech and wish us good luck before we went to the game. He only wanted the best for his learners' futures, therefore, if a learner's marks dropped, he would take him off the rugby team. He also did this to those who played other sports because other teachers would report to him. This was only until their school work was back on track and they were improving academically.

He had many good qualities as a teacher but he also had weaknesses. He was very impatient when it came to Mathematics and he was short-tempered when a learner did not do his homework because, to him, this showed disrespect. But this did not affect how he continued to teach, or those learners who loved him and were smart enough to know what he expected of us; THE BEST. His impatience is the reason I am who I am today, studying to be a great teacher who will help build a bright future for the next generation. I was inspired by a highly skilled teacher and I am very keen to use what I have learnt to nurture my learners.

I will always remember Mr Babu's quotes, "Maths is a language, make it your daily prayer and practice it every day" and "Going to bed without practising Maths is a sin," and many more. These are the quotes that one day I will share with my own learners because I am very grateful that I had a teacher and coach like him taking part in the journey of my life. I once read a quote that said, "Every person you meet has something valuable to teach you," I am glad that he is one of the people who made me look at life out of school differently.



**Going to  
bed without  
practising  
Maths  
is a sin**



***A TRIBUTE TO MR ME MOTHLABANE, ARCHIE MBOLEKWA  
PRIMARY SCHOOL, GRAHAMSTOWN, EASTERN CAPE,  
FROM LULEKA MDLUNGU***

**M**r ME Mothlabane, who was in his 50s, was short and appealing; he was smart and professional, and he took care of his appearance. Mr Mothlabane taught me Mathematics.

I was born in Johannesburg and raised in Transkei in a small town called Ngqamakwe. I later moved to Grahamstown and went to Archie Mbolekwa Primary School, where I did my lower grades. There are many teachers who inspired me, but Mr Mothlabane was the best of them all. We used to call him Mabashi. He was a teacher who liked to joke but he knew the right time to be serious.

When I was in Grade 8, I discovered that Mathematics was a bit different from what we had learned in Grade 7. I began to lose confidence and I was scared of failing the subject. Mr Mothlabane introduced new strategies and formulae for doing Mathematics and he took us through the process of learning these new things. He was supportive and I started to enjoy the subject. The more I learned new things, the more I enjoyed it. It is because of him that even in Grade 9 I was happy when I was told that I will be in his class. He did not just teach for the sake of teaching, but he showed passion and love for the subject. Not only did he help us with our academics, but he also cared for our wellbeing. Mr Mothlabane was a good example to us and we looked up to him. We were encouraged by the good work he did.

He planned our lessons before coming to class, we were always busy with something that would help us. Mr Mothlabane was a caring, respectful and humble teacher who taught us discipline. Each time we got the answers right in class, he would praise us and that encouraged me to do even better. As a result, I would not be discouraged when I did not get the right answer, and instead pushed harder to do better.

Mr Mothlabane always challenged us to overcome difficulties and I no longer saw challenges as a burden or something that would put me down or make me give up. I began to see challenges as a stepping stone to the next level. I even began to challenge myself in Mathematics because I knew that no matter how hard the sum or equation was I would eventually get it right if I stuck at it. Mr Mothlabane also taught us to be selfless and to care for others as we care for ourselves.

Mr Mothlabane was a hard-working teacher, he always strove to do better in helping us learn and to become independent. He worked tirelessly. He helped me to believe in myself because I was always negative, and I had no self confidence. As a result, I became one of the top learners in Mathematics. I began to love it too.

# A teacher who inspired me to love Maths