



EXTRAORDINARY MINDS
EXTRAORDINARY FUTURES

2024 **IMPACT** REPORT

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CEO'S REFLECTION HALLI MANOLAKOS

ONE YEAR ON: STRENGTHENING TRUST, EXPANDING IMPACT – SBF'S JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION



A year ago, I envisioned a future where the SBF brand would stand out and resonate deeply in South Africa's professional landscape. Today, I can confidently say that we have created a tide towards that vision.

Our commitment to shaping resilient, innovative leaders remains unwavering in the context of a business landscape that is rapidly evolving and transitioning through exponential growth and socio-political chaos. In 2024, as an organisation, SBF has not only continued to provide life-changing access to educational journeys, but we've also emerged as a transformative leadership development scholarship shaping the future in real-time.

We've built on the foundation of trust, which we cultivated and grew last year. As the leader of Students for a Better Future, it was essential to see the value our young alumni and laureates from our Susan and Andreas Struengmann Leadership Initiative (SASLI) contribute to the world and hear their voices. We needed to shape the landscape of partnerships through the various engagements, interactions and networks in which we found ourselves.

I knew we would feel a change when employers, small businesses and corporations began speaking for us, seeing the SBF graduate separate from any other resume, and starting to network directly for us. It has been even more exciting to witness the voices of our SASLI laureates, who demonstrate a narrative of resilience, knowledge, skill, drive, adaptability and authenticity. These graduates embody the credibility of the SBF brand.

Just within this year, we've managed to cultivate strong ties to 30+ businesses in South Africa. We've

established four strong partnerships (Deloitte, The Delta, Clicks, Woolworths) that will begin to deliver core programme content outside of their graduate recruitment drives.

Beyond the successes of our SASLI programme and business/industry partnerships, I've watched our alumni step into the professional arena prepared and empowered. They don't just participate; they are starting to lead. They create solutions, inspire teams, and, most importantly, do so with a self-awareness that makes them stand out. One year later, our graduates have not only made a grand entrance into the boardroom but are also leaving their mark in ways we always hoped they would. We've cemented relationships with key employers, strengthened our internal culture of trust, and expanded our network of mentorship and support for our students.

But we're not done. The world keeps evolving, and so must we. In 2025, we will further expand our reach, ensuring that every SBF scholarship recipient understands the critical disruptions taking place and that they develop the right skills for our Future World (our Power Skills, scholarly mastery and wellness practices) – all necessary to thrive!

As I look to the next chapter, I remain as committed as ever to nurturing the leaders of tomorrow: leaders who will not only navigate a fast-changing world but shape it with the values and skills they've honed during their time with us.

REBRANDING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: REIMAGINING SBF SCHOLARSHIPS AS CATALYSTS FOR PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP



At Students for a Better Future (SBF), we believe scholarships are more than financial aid – they are pathways to opportunity, leadership and transformative impact. Yet, the word “scholarship” sometimes carries unintended connotations, leading to perceptions of recipients as “needy” or “different” from their peers in affluent South African schools.

REDEFINING PERCEPTIONS

At SBF, we are changing this narrative. Our scholars are not defined by need but by merit, potential, and the value they bring to their schools and communities. They are not recipients of charity – they are contributors to prestige. They are not outsiders – they are outstanding individuals shaping a better tomorrow.

To reposition SBF scholarships as a symbol of prestige, we shifted our focus. It's no longer about what we provide but about the exceptional opportunities our scholars can access through their determination and talent. This change required introspection: acknowledging the unique value that we offer and the unique

value that our scholars offer, and aligning our message to reflect it.

WHAT MAKES SBF SCHOLARS EXCEPTIONAL?

From the outset, during our recruitment phase, we prioritise identifying young leaders who demonstrate critical thinking skills, collaboration, resilience and drive – the SBF Power Skills. When successful applicants enter our Prep Programme, they begin to strengthen, learn and develop the essential soft skills that set them apart. This focus ensures they excel academically, personally and professionally.

The introduction of the Susan and Andreas Struengmann Leadership Initiative (SASLI) was another

milestone on this journey. SASLI seeks to cultivate well-rounded individuals who bring adaptability, resilience and value to every sphere of their lives. Whether in STEM fields or other disciplines, SASLI laureates are equipped to lead, innovate and inspire across any area of work.

A BROADER IMPACT

By nurturing a generation of exceptional, well-rounded individuals, SBF creates ripple effects beyond the scholars themselves. The impact extends to businesses, the economy, families and communities. Our scholars are the leaders, innovators and change-makers of tomorrow, poised to drive South Africa and the world forward.

SASLI'S STAKE IN THE WORLD

One year ago, we had four key aims for SASLI: that it would attract quality recipients from our high school scholarship, increase prestige, strengthen our alumni network, and target its impact on a select few recipients. Now, we see evidence that SASLI is making significant strides in bridging the gap between academia and the business world, empowering young talent with access to business networks and industry insights.

With a focus on personal leadership, professional skills and engagement, SASLI is not just preparing students for jobs – it's positioning them as influential, dynamic contributors to the global workforce.

A major strength of the SASLI programme lies in its ability to engage with the business sector, establishing a brand that resonates with both students and potential employers. Through strategic partnerships, mentorship opportunities and a well-defined rewards system aligned to industry needs, SASLI has managed to build connections that elevate laureates into competitive candidates for prestigious business and corporate roles.

THE SASLI TRANSFORMATION

SBFs previous post-secondary programme struggled with engagement and a lack of long-term developmental focus, with few students viewing it as an opportunity for meaningful personal or professional growth. In response, SASLI was designed with a more aspirational and prestigious focus. This shift is reflected in the programme branding and messaging, and the types of opportunities we curate and incentivise.

One of the most notable outcomes of this transformation has been the improved perception of SASLI among both students and employers. SASLI is quickly becoming a sought-after opportunity. This is largely due to its deliberate focus on professional skills development, mentorship and networking. A clear illustration of this shift can be seen in the programme's success on LinkedIn, where SASLI has gained nearly 1,000 followers in less than a year.

REIMAGINING OUR BRAND

To communicate this evolution, we reimaged our visual identity and digital presence. Our messaging now reflects our distinctiveness: SBF is where extraordinary potential meets unparalleled opportunity.

SBF searches the realms of the ordinary to uncover the most extraordinary young minds. Through our support, they gain access to the tools, experiences and networks they need to take themselves – and South Africa's businesses – to extraordinary new heights.

Together, we are not just shaping better futures for our scholars and laureates, but for everyone they encounter.



CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT: UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES

More than 30 business partners have attended a SASLI event in some capacity in 2024, and four will begin to deliver core programme content to our laureate cohort in 2025. Businesses are offered the opportunity to join SASLI events, to host tours and workshops, to nominate mentors, and to offer internships, job shadows, vac work and graduate placements. Early results indicate that SASLI's inroads into corporate spaces are already yielding internship and job shadowing opportunities for laureates.

Additionally, the initiative's rewards system has played a pivotal role in driving engagement and building corporate-ready skills. Laureates earn rewards by completing leadership training modules, attending events, and contributing to the programme's social media presence. This approach not only motivates students but also allows them to accumulate professional milestones that can enhance their resumes and LinkedIn profiles.

This two-pronged approach puts intentional focus on the connection point between our graduating laureates and the world of work they are entering. With close corporate engagement, we are consistently improving our understanding of employer needs and funnelling this back into SASLI learning content and opportunities.

FUTURE PROSPECTS: EXPAND- ING SASLI'S BUSINESS REACH

Looking ahead, SASLI is focused on expanding its reach and deepening its corporate partnerships. One of the key objectives for the coming years is to develop structured internship and job shadowing programmes, ensuring that all second- and final-year laureates gain exposure to relevant work environments.

This emphasis on real-world experience will be bolstered by increased engagement with business partners, who are encouraged to offer mentorship, internships and job opportunities to SASLI laureates. These collaborations not only benefit the students but also help companies tap into a pool of highly motivated, well-rounded candidates. Given the focus on developing "prestigious talent," SASLI is positioning itself as a valuable partner for corporations looking to invest in future leaders.

In addition to these business partnerships, SASLI will continue to promote its brand through strategic marketing efforts. This includes leveraging the visibility of its laureates on social media, with a particular focus on LinkedIn, where many corporate professionals are active. Encouraging students to share their achievements and progress on LinkedIn not only enhances their personal brands, but also serves as a powerful marketing tool for SASLI, raising awareness of the programme and its growing impact.

SASLI is a future-focused initiative. By providing students with leadership development, coaching and mentorship, and real-world experience, SASLI is equipping its laureates with the skills and networks necessary to succeed in an undefinable future world. As the programme continues to evolve, it will undoubtedly play an even greater role in shaping the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs, ensuring that SASLI's impact extends far beyond the lives of the individuals it supports.

BUSINESS NETWORKING: ACCESS!

SASLI is a prestigious three-year leadership development programme for the top performers of our high school programme. It builds on the work of the high school programme to produce well-rounded, agile, adaptable, resilient and goal-oriented high performers who add value to the workplaces they enter.

Building a better future for South Africa means providing our most promising and talented young people with the skills and tools to become tomorrow's dynamic leaders. SBF believes that true wellbeing means nurturing the physical, psychological, financial, social and intellectual. Therefore, the quality and sustainability of our partner and mentor relationships are crucial to fulfilling this goal.

ACCESS GEN Z IS A FIRST OF ITS KIND

In September 2024, the SBF team hosted our first-ever ACCESS brunch, where two of our talented young laureates accompanied a panel of experts to unpack and discuss what's on the minds of businesses around Gen Z, how our laureates are looking at work and how best to connect the two perspectives. At the business brunch, we began to demonstrate the thinking potential of the organisation, understanding ourselves as thought leaders in developing young leaders. We showcased the magnitude of the impact of Power Skills, determination and self-learning in real time. The event saw 20 business partners journey with us and began the stage of partnering for real success long into the future.

After a successful business brunch in 2024 showcasing our amazing, talented laureates, we are planning two brunches in 2025 in collaboration with businesses and start-ups. This will strengthen our existing relationships and connections with business partners who employ our graduates and introduce new employment partners to students and graduates for a better future. These business partners will also assist us in delivering critical work-readiness content for the SASLI Programme.

We have the potential within our cohort of students and alumni graduates. This is our shared opportunity to tap into this pool of young leaders, dial into impact and industry change, and shape the communities and markets in which we operate.





PREP PROGRAMME RE-IMAGINED

Since the inception of SBF, we have been running a Prep Programme. It has become increasingly evident that the focus of our Prep Programme, which was redesigned in 2019, needed a major overhaul to prepare our scholars adequately for their high school journeys.

57 Scholars participated in the 2024 Prep Programme.

56% Male 

44% Female 

In 2024, our team looked at where Grade 8 scholars and parents struggled, what academic challenges and successes we had specifically within the grade, and how we could best solve these issues. It's been remarkable to see our Prep Programme re-imagined to holistically prepare Grade 7 scholars for high school, focusing on academic readiness, power skills development and wellness, whilst working to build a strong sense of community. The changes aimed to ensure scholars and parents are supported through a comprehensive structure addressing their academic, emotional and social needs.

Below is an overview of the changes made and their anticipated or realised impact.

KEY ENHANCEMENTS AND IMPACT

1. Programme structure

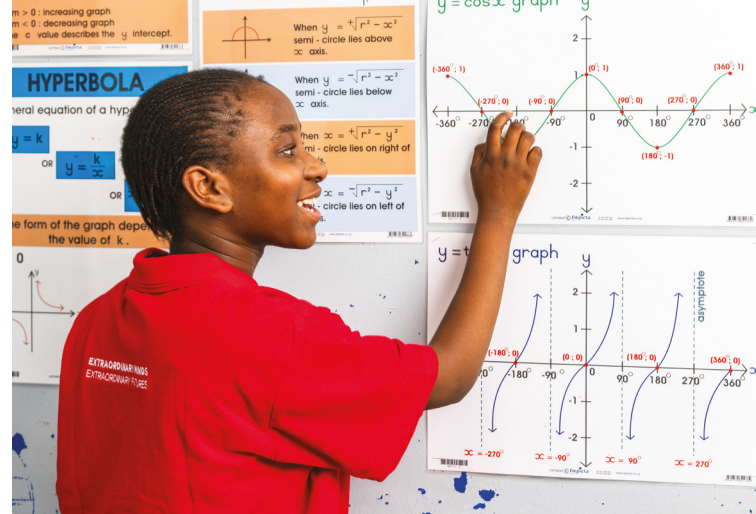
In the past, we offered a six-day Holiday Club. Now, we've reimagined our programme with a multi-faceted structure, including a Prep launch event, seven monthly Saturday Prep classes culminating in a Graduation, and a three-day Holiday Programme offering continuity throughout the year.

IMPACT: These changes mean more consistent touchpoints that mirror the high school experience. By building habits, deepening learning, and providing year-round support, we're setting scholars up for success as they transition to high school.

2. Mathematics

Previously, we held six Numeric maths sessions. Now, we're empowering students with the My Gooru online maths platform aligned with the CAPS curriculum, for daily practice; seven Maths lessons incorporated into Prep Classes and eight Additional Maths lessons grouped by competency; as well as the Disa Maths Intervention Programme, offering targeted support where needed.

IMPACT: Scholars gain personalised and regular exposure to maths, building their competency and confidence. By catering to diverse student needs, we ensure no one is left behind.



3. Wellness

Wellness used to mean one day of fun activities. Now, it's woven throughout the year with monthly wellness lessons focusing on the seven dimensions of wellness; and self-regulation strategies and the Early Adolescent Skills for Emotions (EASE) programme to help manage stress.

IMPACT: These activities promote holistic wellbeing by teaching scholars to manage emotions, stress and overall mental health – skills essential for academic and personal success.

4. Power Skills

In the past, we ran three personal leadership sessions. We have now expanded this to include monthly Power Skills lessons covering self-management, goal setting, and collaborative relationships; and a holiday club Power Skills experience and reflective practices.

IMPACT: These advancements foster the essential life skills scholars need to thrive in high school and beyond, from teamwork to leadership abilities.

5. Coding

Coding is new to our offering. We have introduced three coding workshops and a 4-month coding club.

IMPACT: This gives scholars a strong foundation in digital and computational thinking skills, preparing them for a technology-driven world.

6. Community service

Community service was introduced as part of our programme and we have incorporated initiatives like the Mandela Day Sandwich Making.

IMPACT: We are instilling values of empathy and service, helping scholars understand the importance of social responsibility.

7. Parent engagement

In the past, we focused on Life Choices sessions for parents. We have now expanded those sessions with the EASE programme for parents as well as family meetings for personalised support.

IMPACT: By strengthening family involvement, we ensure parents are equipped to navigate their children's high school journey and challenges.

8. Tracking and interventions

We have implemented a comprehensive tracking system focused on attendance, submissions, lesson completion and results. We also implement individualised plans and interventions, such as family meetings and warning letters, for those needing additional support.

IMPACT: These data-driven insights enable early interventions, ensuring scholars stay on track and receive targeted support.

9. Handover to high school

Previously, we did not facilitate a handover to high school for scholars. We have since developed individual profiles for each scholar, including family dynamics, home context, attitude, behaviour, academics and tailored recommendations.

IMPACT: These profiles ensure a smooth transition into Grade 8, equipping High School Coordinators and Partner High Schools with actionable insights to continue supporting the scholars effectively.

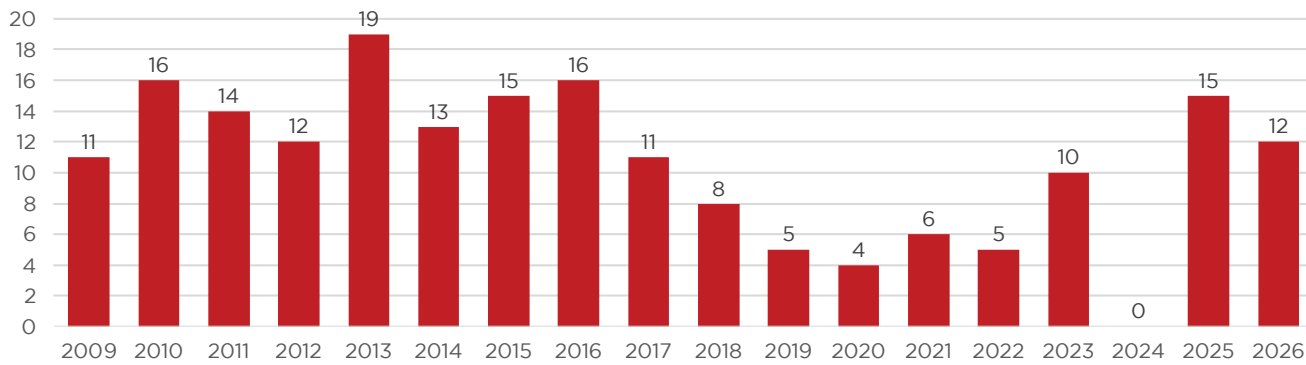
The refined Prep Programme represents a comprehensive shift from a basic academic support structure to a dynamic, multi-faceted programme focused on academic excellence, life skills, wellness and community building. By integrating these enhancements, the programme ensures that scholars not only transition smoothly into high school but are more likely to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Robust parental engagement and tracking mechanisms fortify this approach, enabling a collaborative effort between students, parents and educators.

This transformation sets a benchmark for holistic education, equipping scholars with tools for long-term success.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

RECRUITMENT PROGRAMME

The graph shows the number of new feeder schools per intake year since 2009

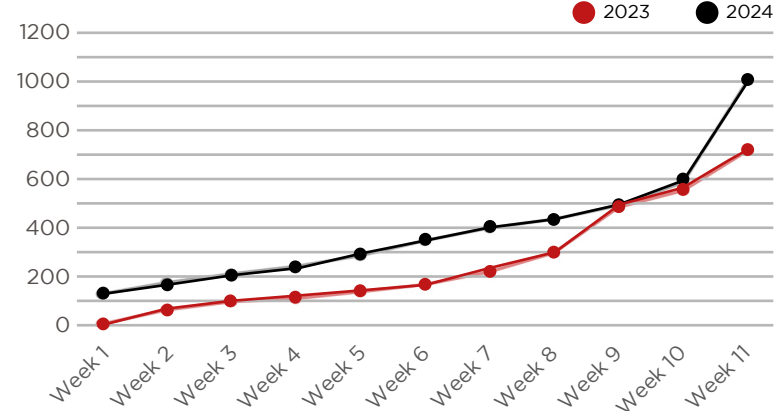


192 feeder schools for the High School Programme

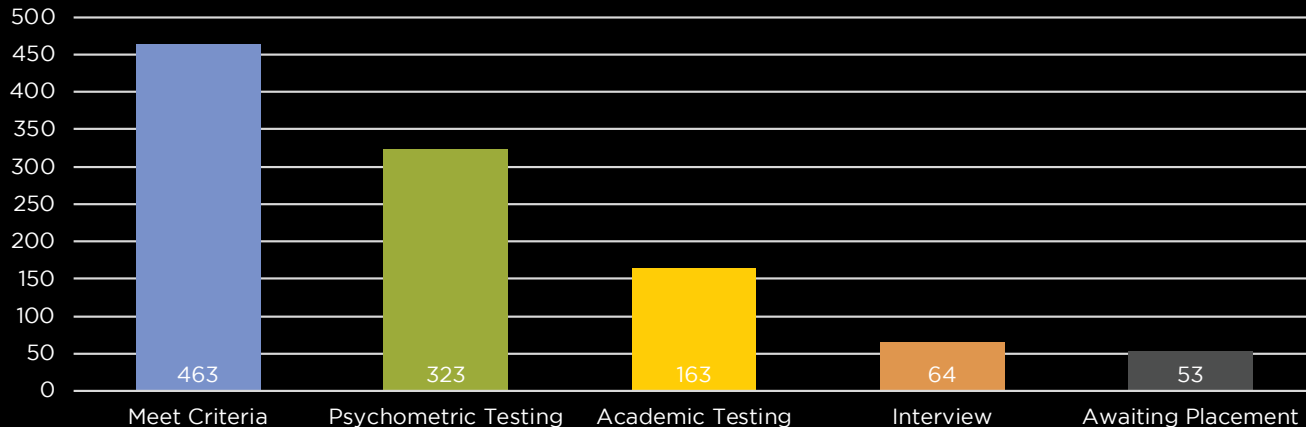
Between 2023 (Intake '25) and 2025 (intake '26) Recruitment, we achieved a total of 27 new feeder schools.

1011 applications received in 2024

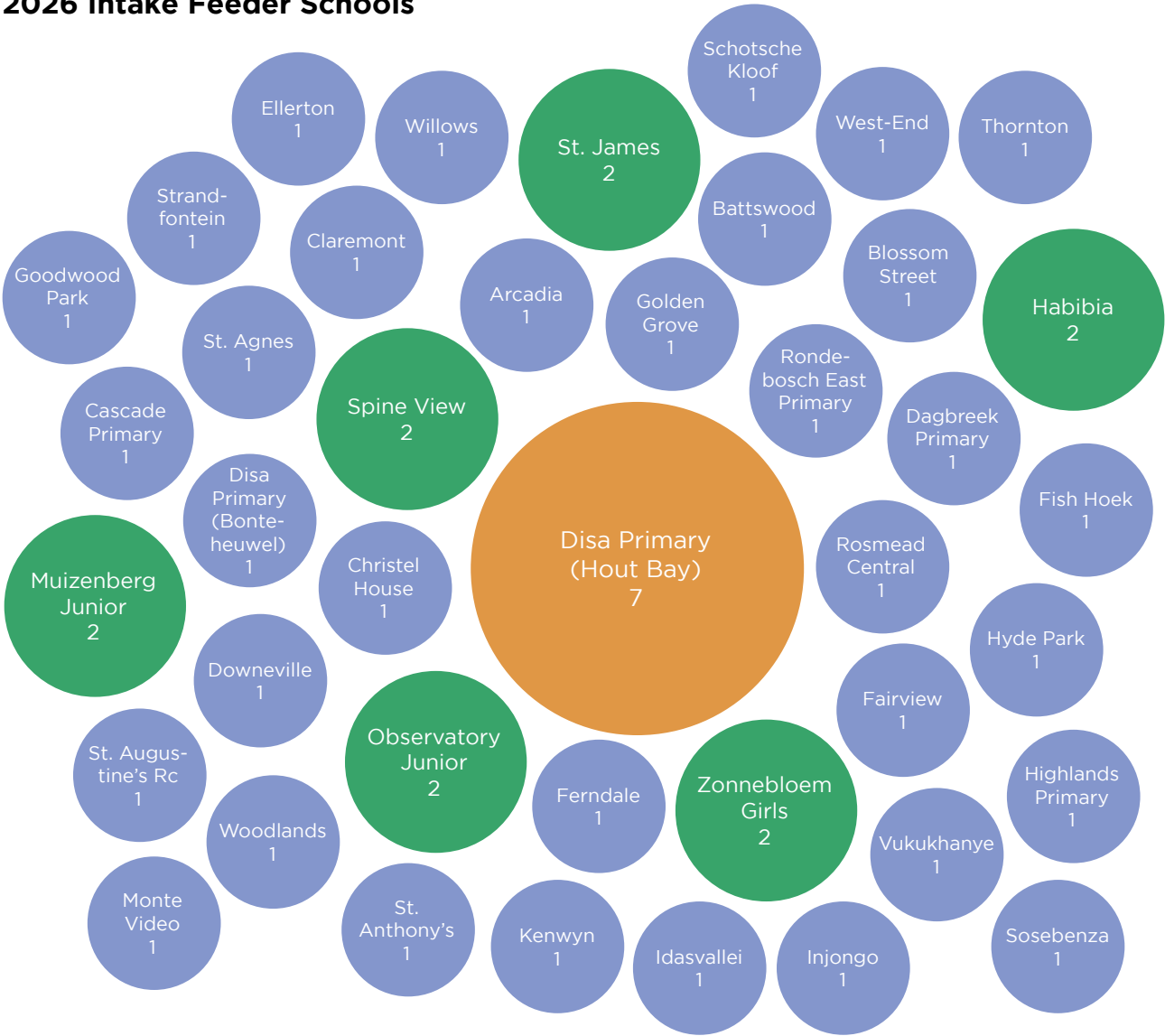
Application comparison between 2023 and 2024 Recruitment drive



Recruitment Stages showcasing the number of candidates per stage in 2024 for the 2026 Intake



2026 Intake Feeder Schools





MEASURING OUR IMPACT

PREP PROGRAMME

THE MYGOORU PLATFORM

MyGooru is an innovative online learning platform designed to enhance scholars' success through personalised and engaging educational content. Specifically for Grade 7 scholars, MyGooru provides supplementary Mathematics preparation tailored to individual learning needs.

The platform offers interactive lessons, quizzes and progress tracking, enabling scholars to strengthen their foundational Mathematics skills. It uses adaptive technology to identify gaps in understanding and provides targeted exercises to help scholars overcome challenges efficiently.

The below bar graph compares the performance of scholars in Mathematics using the MyGooru platform, based on a pre-test and post-test across three performance categories: **60% or greater**, **59-40%**, and **below 40%**.

Overall Conclusion:

The MyGooru platform has positively impacted scholars' performance in Mathematics. The most notable gains are observed in the transition from lower to higher performance categories, with a significant increase in scores of 60% or greater and a sharp decline in scores below 40%. This highlights the platform's role in building both competence and confidence among Grade 7 scholars.

Which classes did you find most helpful?

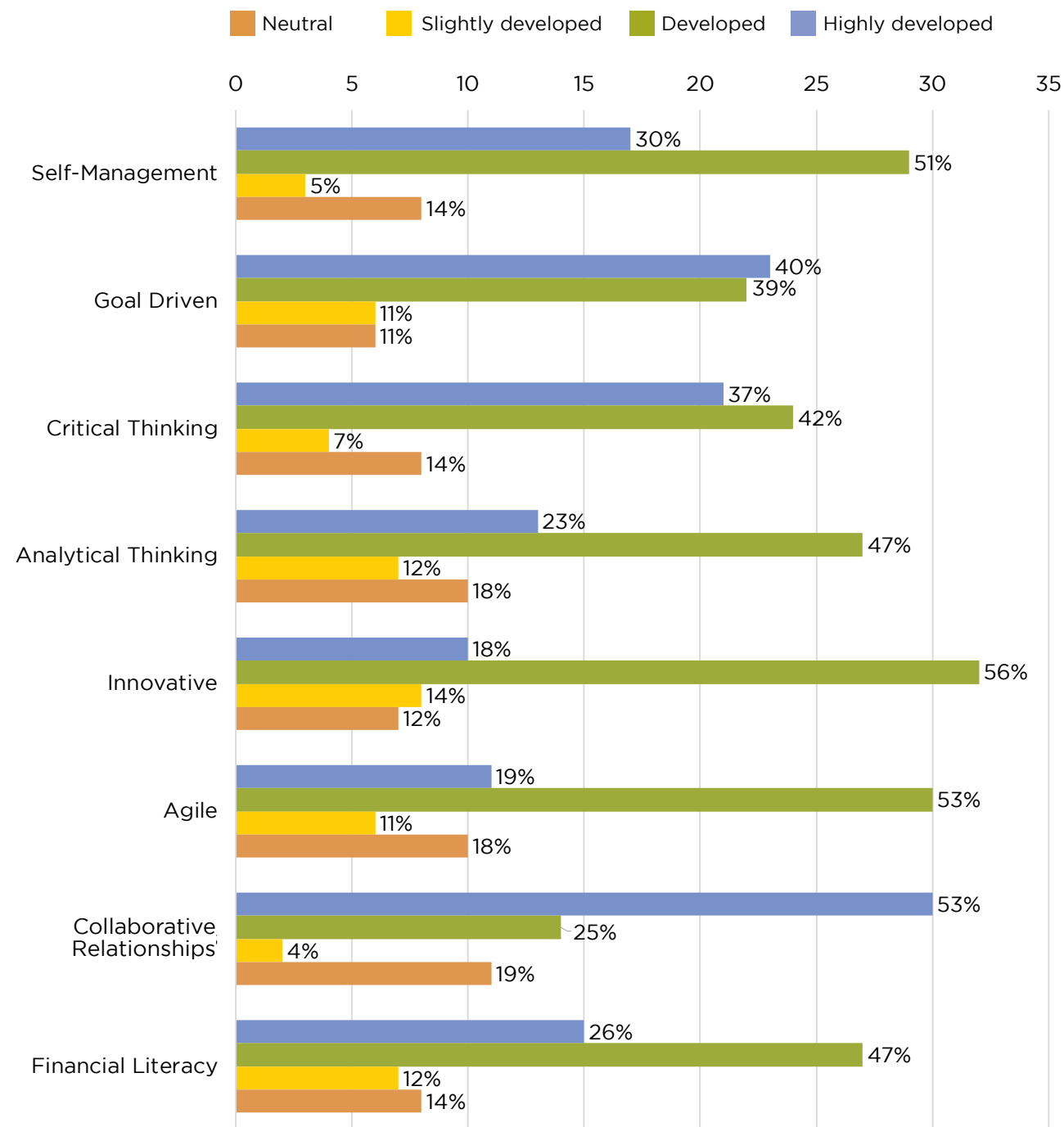


- 46% (26) Mathematics
- 12% (7) Power skills
- 23% (13) Wellness
- 19% (11) English

89%⁽⁵¹⁾

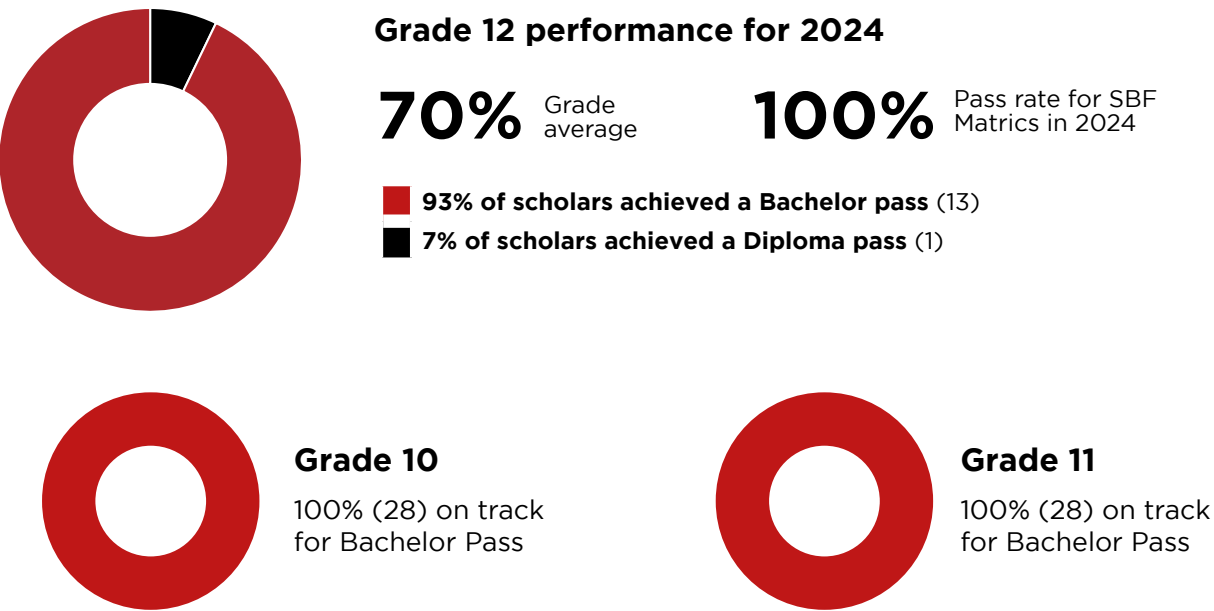
of scholars said that MyGooru was helping them with school Maths

How much have you have developed the eight SBF Power Skills?

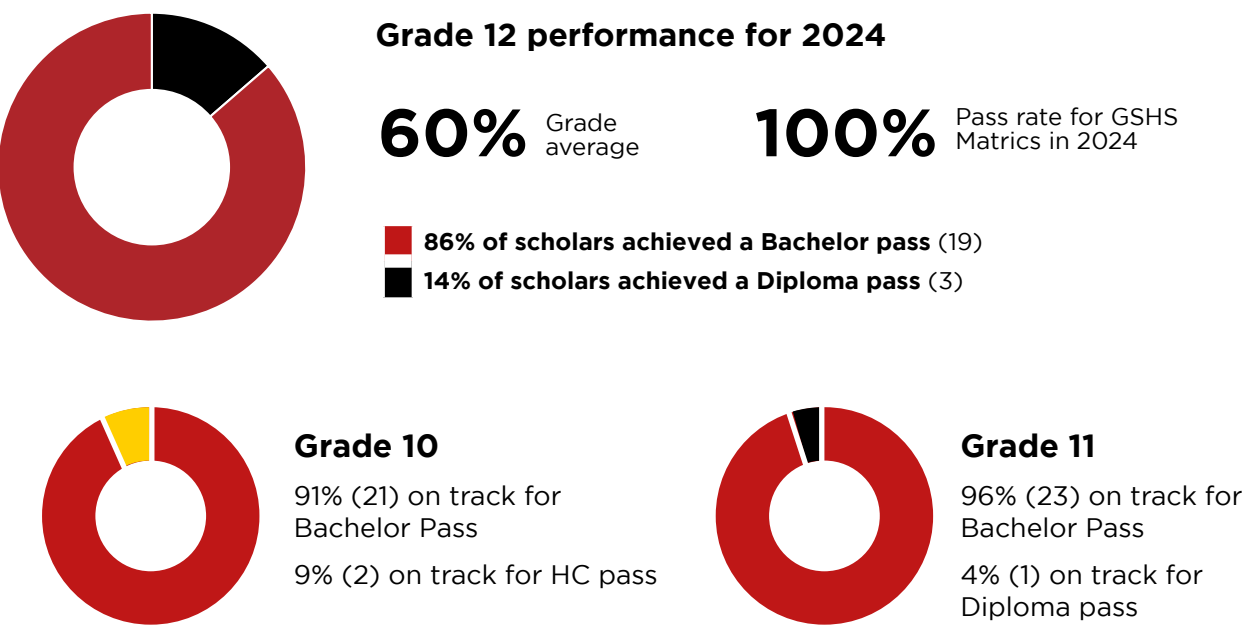


"In the past, we ran three personal leadership sessions. Now, we've expanded this to include monthly Power Skills lessons covering self-management, goal setting, and collaborative relationships; and a holiday club Power Skills experience and reflective practices."

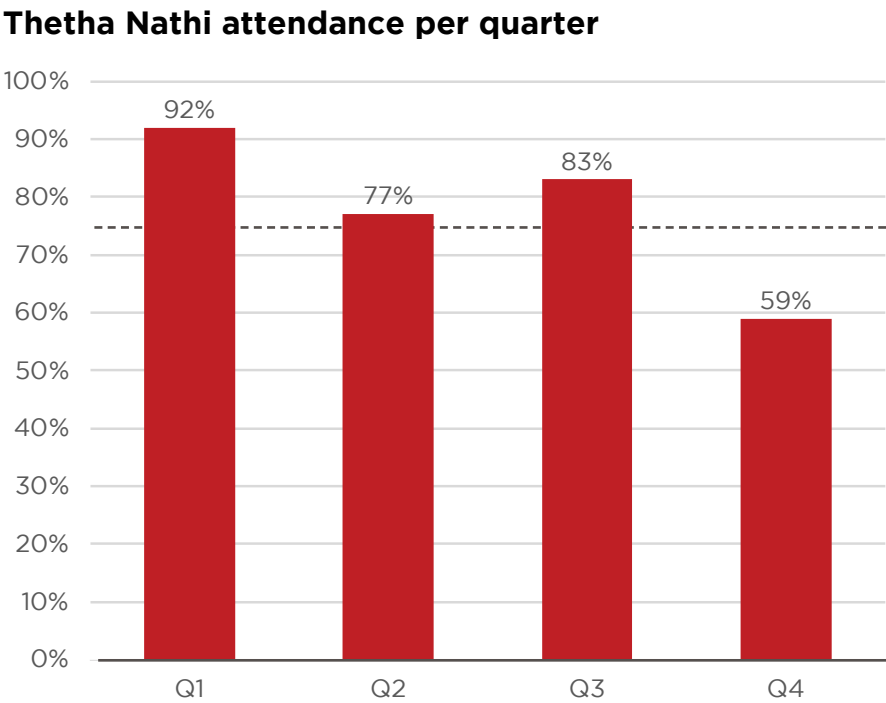
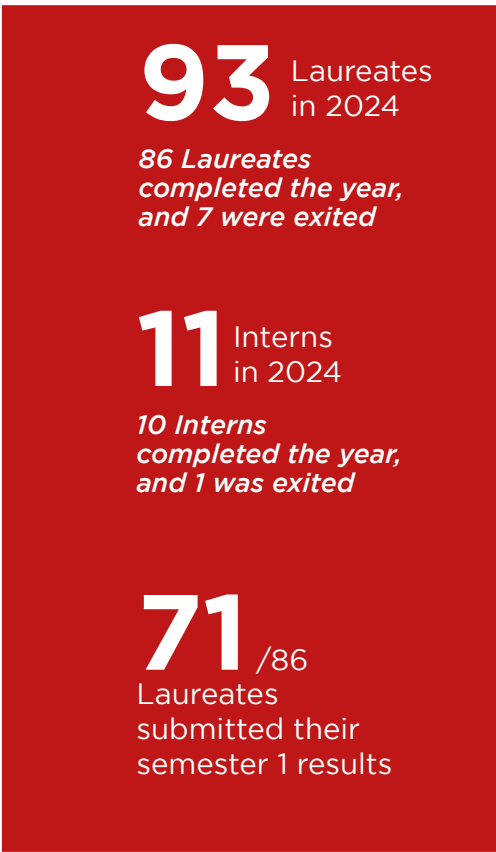
SBF HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP



GROOTE SCHUUR HIGH SCHOOL (GSHS)

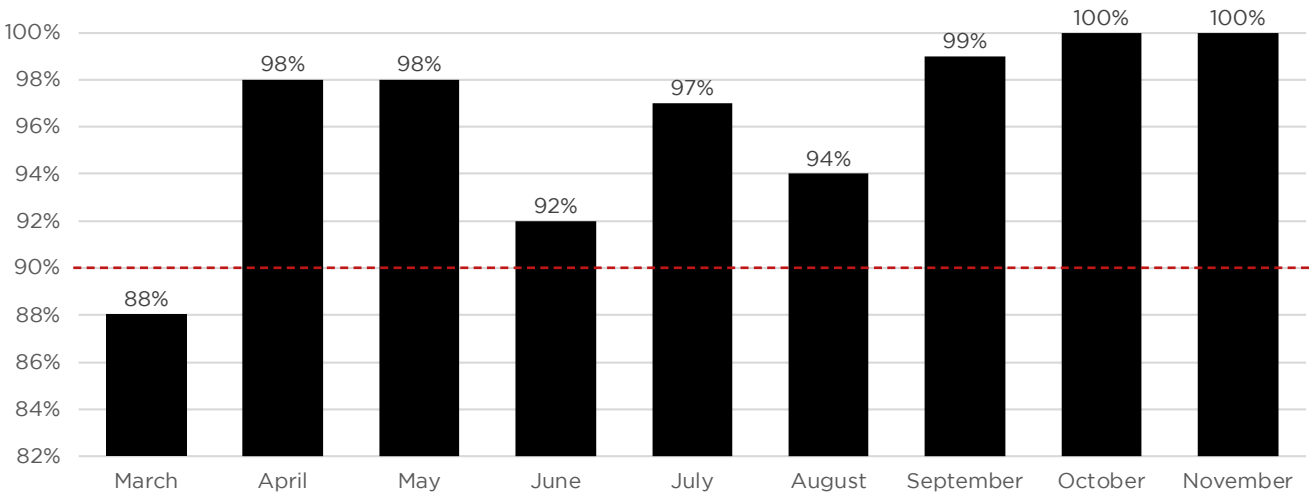


SUSAN & ANDREAS STRUENGMANN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE (SASLI)



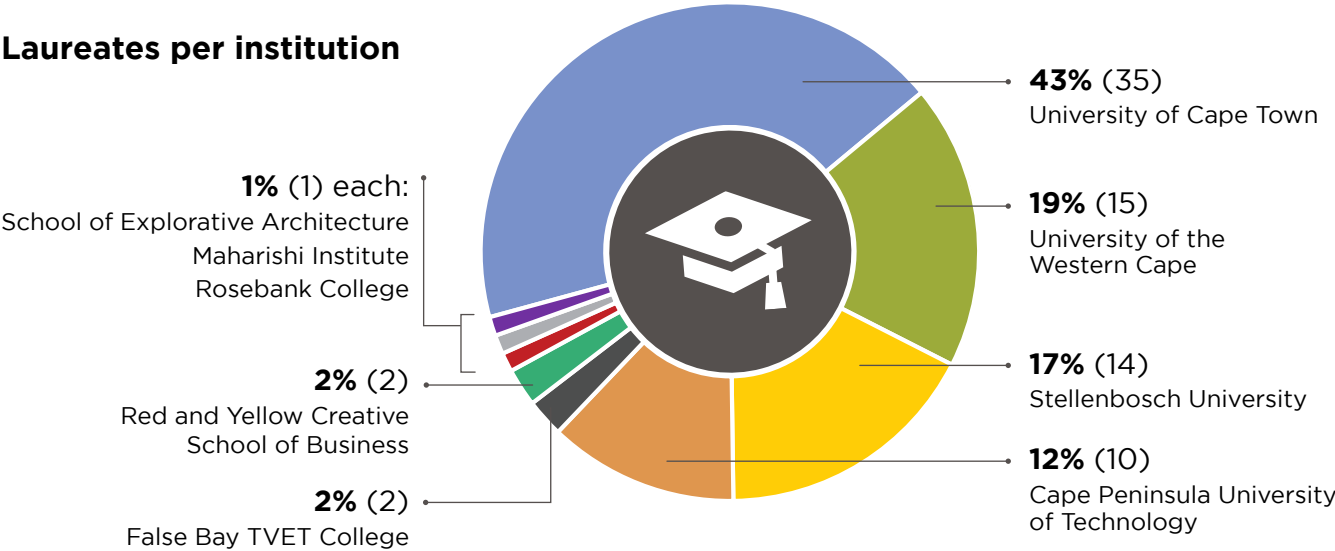
The **target for Thetha Nathi attendance is 75%** per quarter, a target that was reached for 3 consecutive quarters from Q1-Q3

LinkedIn Learning completion rate by laureates per month



The **target for LinkedIn Learning completion rates by laureates is 90%** per month. This KPI was achieved consecutively in all months except March in 2024.

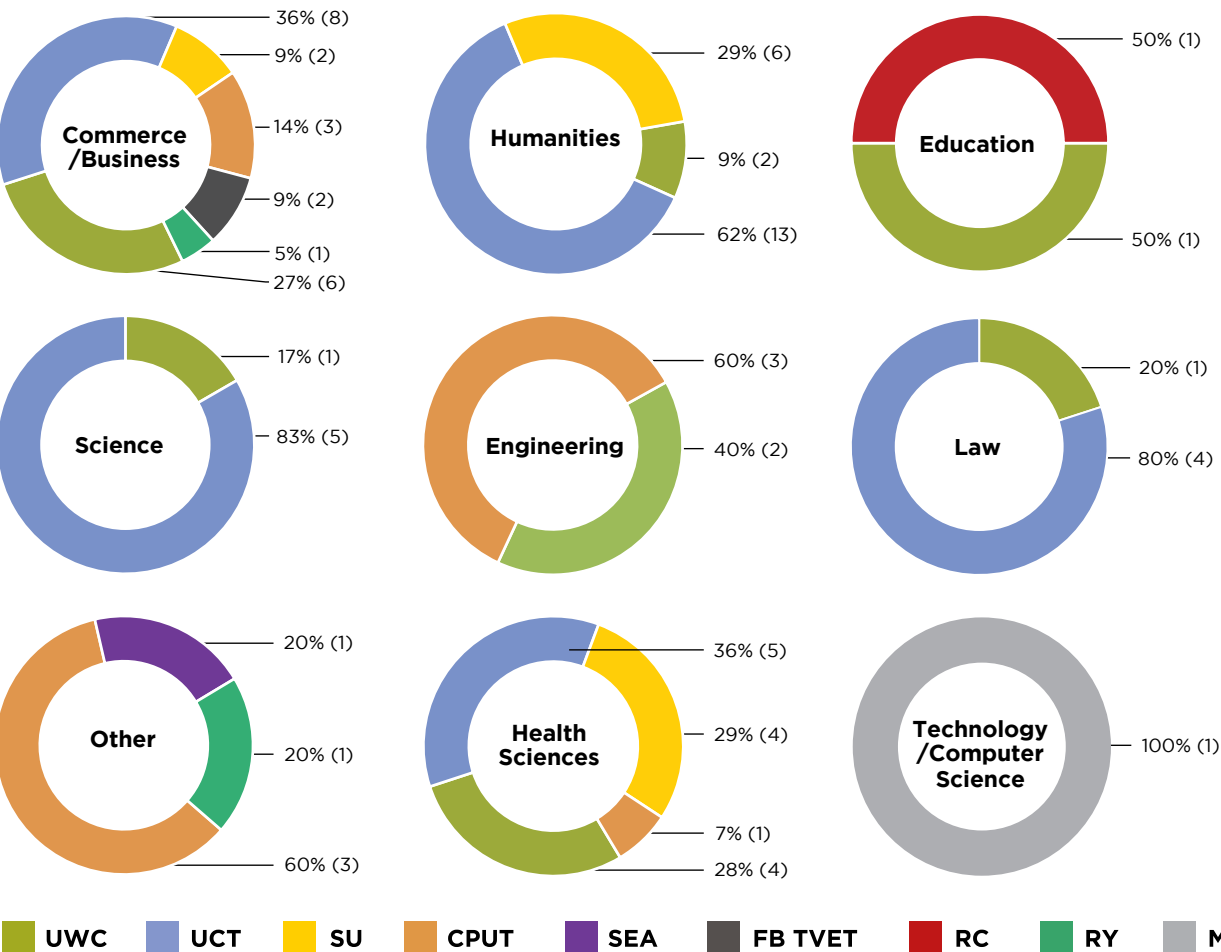
Laureates per institution



Faculties

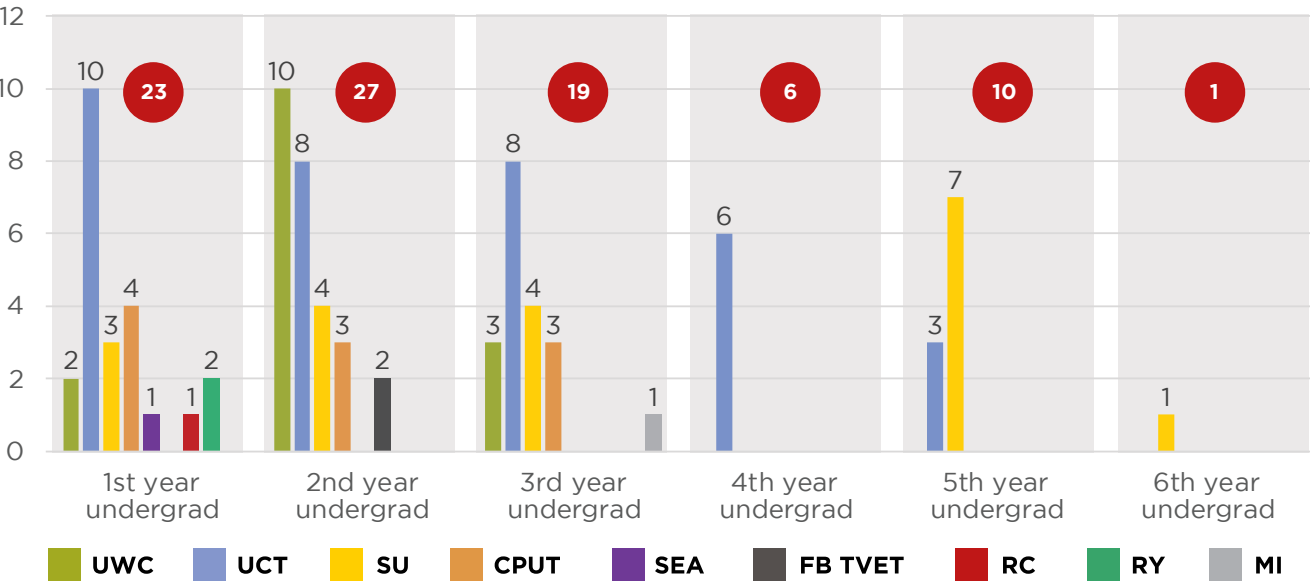


Faculties per institution



CPUT – Cape Peninsula University of Technology; RY – Red and Yellow Creative School of Business; SU – Stellenbosch University; UCT – University of Cape Town; UWC – University of the Western Cape; SEA – School of Explorative Architecture; FB TVET – False Bay TVET College; RC – Rosebank College; MI – Maharishi Institute

Laureates study year per institution



WHAT DO OUR LAUREATES HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE PROGRAMME?

The feedback on the SASLI programme underscores the significant strides SASLI has made in transforming the lives of laureates, while highlighting opportunities to refine its initiatives for even greater impact.

Overall Satisfaction:

Laureates expressed profound gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities and support provided by SASLI. Many credited the programme for their personal growth, academic success, and professional development.

Areas for Improvement:

Suggestions for enhancing the programme included introducing healthcare-focused sessions, providing more balanced conference schedules, and offering greater opportunities for rest and networking during events.

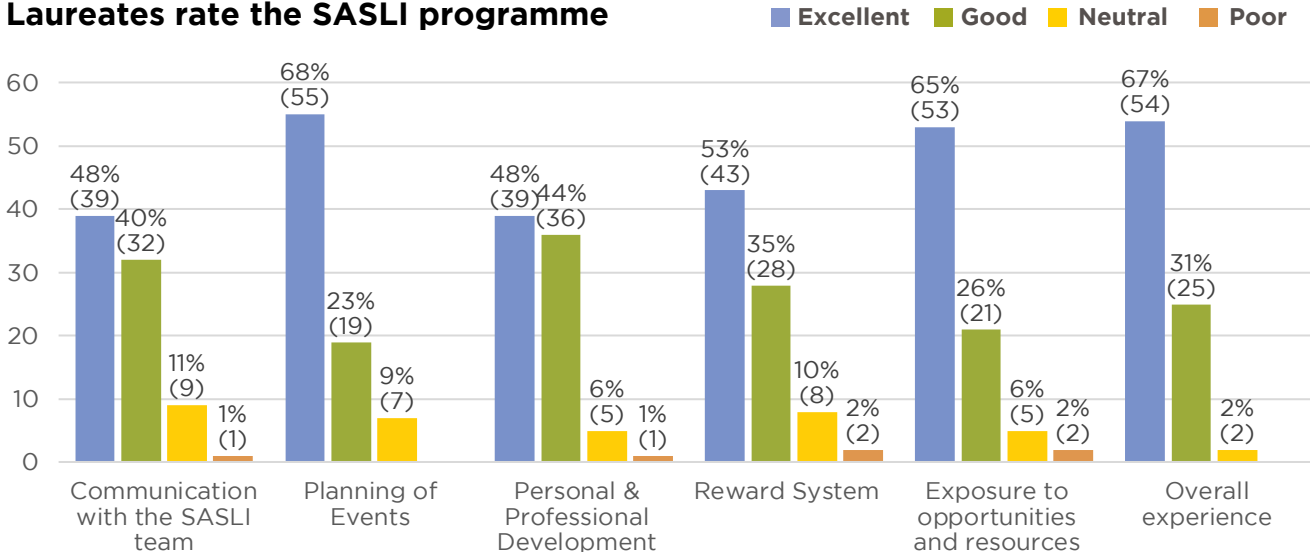
Community Impact:

Several laureates praised the sense of community fostered by SASLI, highlighting the supportive environment and the dedication of the team in facilitating their journey.

Engagement and Growth:

Many laureates shared reflections on how SASLI enabled them to step out of their comfort zone and embrace personal and professional challenges, with specific mention of the mentoring and coaching components.

Laureates rate the SASLI programme





74%⁽⁶⁰⁾ of laureates opted in and completed coaching in 2024

85%⁽⁶⁹⁾ of laureates are very likely to recommend the SASLI programme

KEY THEMES FROM COACHING FEEDBACK

Laureates reflect on their coaching journey and how coaching has helped them.

1

Personal Growth & Self-Awareness

Many laureates reported increased self-awareness, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth.

"I've been able to break through barriers and reach new levels of self-understanding."

2

Goal-Setting & Accountability

Coaching helped laureates develop actionable goals and strategies to achieve them.

"Coaching gave me a helpful framework for setting goals and finding direction."

3

Emotional & Mental Well-Being

Several laureates reflected on how coaching provided a space to manage stress and improve emotional resilience.

"The coach taught me breathing and meditation techniques that I've been using to manage my stress and anxiety throughout the year."

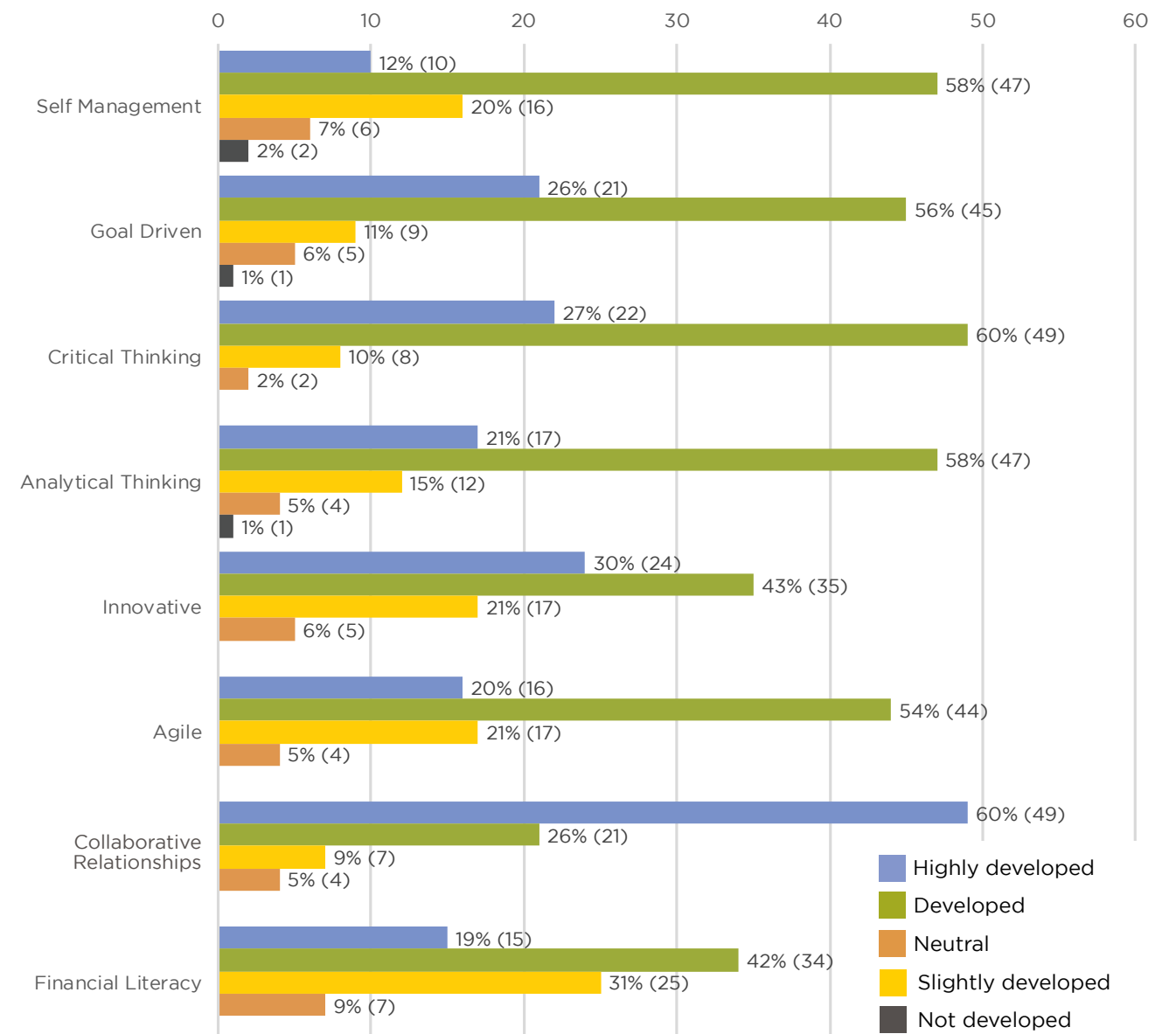
4

Academic Support & Career Development

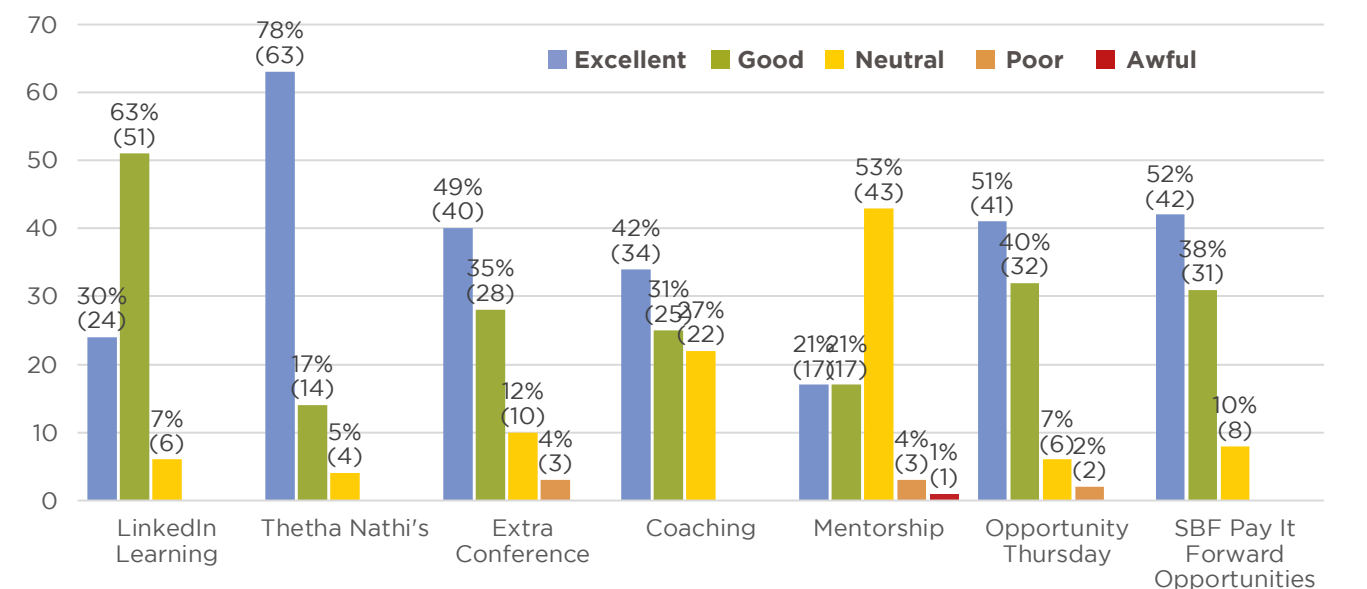
Coaches provided guidance on study techniques, career planning, and academic success.

"Coaching has especially helped me academically, making me more aware of my goals and how to stay focused throughout."

Laureates rate their Power Skills development



Laureates rate their SASLI key programme Experiences





9 Scholarships have been terminated between 2023 and 2024

260

Scholars participated in the 2024 High School Programme

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMME

OUR FOCUS IS ON ACADEMICS

At its core, SBF is an academic scholarship with rigorous recruitment standards and testing, and an ongoing focus throughout the programme on academics – particularly mathematics and sciences. We support academic performance through personalised Scholar Development Plan meetings, leveraging in-school resources such as extra lessons, and providing one on one and small-group tutoring to scholars who need it.

Despite this support, data indicates a steady decline in Mathematics scores from Grade 8 to 12 (for every cohort with the exception of the 2022 intake), with too many scholars ultimately struggling to get above 60% for Mathematics in Grade 12, or to keep pure Mathematics as a subject (instead of switching to Mathematical Literacy) throughout their high school journey. This is problematic, as children require a minimum of 60% for Mathematics to gain entry for a science, maths or technology degree at university level.

In early 2024, the High School Programme initiated a project to attempt to understand the nature of the challenge, and to develop and implement a solution to greatly increase the proportion of scholars taking and passing Mathematics as a subject in Matric with scores greater than 60%.

SBF partnered with an educational research, data and analysis provider, Proteus (a firm specialising in academic interventions). **Together, we identified three key initiatives:**

1. Identifying and implementing a **mathematics assessment tool** that serves as a stronger indicator of academic success later on.
2. Developing and implementing an **Early Warning System** that triggers thoughtful and impactful responses.
3. Reviewing, iterating and embedding a **revised monitoring and evaluation framework** that collects the right data, at the right time, to generate insights that lead to action and impact.

The online learning platform *Siyavula* was identified as the platform through which to conduct a baseline mathematics assessment for all of our scholars, as well as to serve as one of the primary intervention tools for those needing additional mathematics support. *Siyavula* provides free access to learners and is aligned to the WCED curriculum, offering online textbooks, practice questions, mock exams and progress/mastery tracking.

The baseline assessment conducted in May 2024 revealed foundational learning gaps consistent across many of our scholars, and gave us the ability to see tailored analysis per scholar of the specific topics with which they do and do not struggle. Since July, our intervention plan has relied on these insights and has been centred around understanding and leveraging school-based resources, encouraging (if not requiring) weekly *Siyavula* practice, and engaging Mathematics teachers to offer individual and small-group tutoring.

Term 3 results showed minor, though insignificant, improvement on average across the full scholar cohort, and a full analysis will be re-conducted in early 2025 using 2024 results to refine intervention plans for the year.

In 2025, we are looking to grow our tutoring support through school-based tutors. We want to fill gaps in comprehensive knowledge, continue to invest early and ensure online learning fills in the hours of practice required to build the mathematics “muscles” our scholars need.

SBF'S NEW STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

Through a bottom-up approach, we have solidified our thinking around the critical success principles that set our scholarship recipients – and ourselves – apart. How do we understand the unique value of the SBF programmes? It's about the learnings and programme teachings that are inculcated within our young leaders.

The concept of *Extraordinary minds, Extraordinary futures* requires intentional training and teaching far beyond what our schools can and are investing in. Through consistent surveys, we've found that our young scholars and SASLI laureates have acquired some of what is needed to set them up for extraordinary futures through access to quality education. That said, the critical levers for success must also be included, or at least partially included. This approach has led us to identify game-changing individuals.



Principle 1: Scholarly pursuit and mastery

SBF cultivates scholars with exceptional academic and career achievements, underpinned by a relentless pursuit of knowledge. Scholars develop a personal brand and a solid track record through disciplined learning, supported by Cape Town's top-performing partner schools. These institutions provide quality education, extra academic support and holistic experiences, ensuring scholars are equipped for post-secondary education and economic progress.

Academic achievement, a cornerstone of the programme, requires scholars to maintain high GPAs, actively engage in their studies, and demonstrate grit. They focus on consistent performance, interrogate assumptions and embrace continuous improvement beyond mere exam results. SBF emphasises self-discipline, diligence and effective study habits, encouraging scholars to learn from mistakes and maintain a robust academic record.

A growth mindset, as defined by Carol Dweck, is integral to this principle. Belief in the potential to develop abilities through effort fosters resilience, self-confidence and a drive for lifelong learning. This mindset empowers scholars to overcome setbacks, achieve academic success and thrive in their pursuits. By embedding this approach, SBF ensures its scholars are not only high achievers but also resilient individuals poised to impact society positively.



Principle 2: The SBF Power Skills

Understanding the world of work is imperative to supporting our scholarship recipients in the fifth industrial revolution (5IR). Through research and the triangulation of data from corporates and leading experts, SBF has consolidated a list of critical Power Skills to develop within our scholars, laureates and graduates, providing them with a competitive advantage in the world of work and in their lives.

The SBF Power Skills are:

- self-management,
- communicating with impact,
- goal orientation/proactivity,
- critical and conceptual thinking,
- analytical thinking and problem-solving,
- innovation,
- agility,
- collaboration, and
- financial literacy.

The consensus is that skills development is essential for those developing technological innovations. Power Skills, sometimes called soft skills, will become as important for people not working directly in technology development, especially for using and interacting with AI. Power Skills (soft skills) are increasingly important to bring about change and cope with the new realities.





Principle 3: Empowering parents

Years of data and reflections with our scholarship recipients and families confirm that scholars thrive academically and otherwise when they have the consistent support of a parent or guardian.

We cannot realise the organisation's purpose and help scholars grow into their family's first-generation leaders without working closely with parents, providing them with resources and support, and ensuring they can take ownership of their children's journeys. This is essential for steering away from biases (which are often old and outdated when it comes to careers and studies) and educating our parents and guardians in the critical domains of work we undertake. It also helps to ensure that, like our scholars, their parents and guardians are constantly learning, growing and actively steering their children towards data-informed choices.

By giving the SBF parents and guardians a platform for dialogues around issues that their children experience in their academic journey, we are further empowering them to support our young scholars and laureates. This is one of the fundamental foundational principles that will help ensure beneficiary success.



Principle 4: Wellness and wellbeing

We prioritise wellness and wellbeing to develop anti-fragile alumni who excel in their careers and lead purpose-driven lives. Antifragility goes beyond resilience, focusing on growth and adaptation when faced with challenges. Alumni learn to turn setbacks into opportunities, using failures as steps towards success and embracing change as a catalyst for improvement. This mental strength – akin to "weightlifting" for the brain – enables them to thrive amidst life's complexities.

Holistic wellness underpins SBF's approach, transitioning from problem-focused psychosocial support to cultivating strengths and positive growth through evidence-based practices in positive psychology. Wellness, conceptualised as an "active pursuit," involves intentional choices and actions to build optimal health and holistic wellbeing. This multidimensional model encompasses physical, mental, and social health, fostering happiness, purpose, and the ability to manage stress effectively.

Our scholars develop essential life skills through active citizenship, which encourages gratitude, volunteering and community support to discover personal purpose and enhance their CVs. This holistic framework enables alumni to thrive, not just survive, as healthy, connected and fulfilled individuals. By integrating wellness practices and experiential learning, we equip young professionals to navigate complexity, maintain balance and achieve lasting success in both their personal and professional lives.



Principle 5: Prepared for the future world of work

We equip alumni with the courage and skills to thrive in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world. They are adaptable, future-focused and highly sought-after talents who excel in their careers. The rapid advancement of technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and automation, is transforming the world of work. We address these changes, preparing scholars to navigate careers shaped by the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions (4IR and 5IR). By focusing on STEM education, scholars gain critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are transferable across industries, enabling them to lead innovation and tackle global challenges.

We have set ambitious targets: ***we want 30% of our high school graduates to pursue core STEM studies on a post-secondary level, and we want 50% of our high school scholars to take STEM subjects, enhancing their university acceptance prospects.*** Beyond technical skills, scholars develop essential "Power Skills," such as adaptability, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial thinking, preparing them for evolving work models and sustainable development. This ensures our alumni are industry-ready, impact-driven leaders capable of navigating uncertainty, fostering innovation and creating lasting social and economic change.



Principle 6: Leaders in their own right

Self-leadership is key in personal success, learning and development. It enables us to influence our thoughts and actions, set clear goals, and take accountability for achieving them. In a fast-paced and complex world, self-leadership ensures we can navigate challenges, seize opportunities and remain accountable for our progress, empowering us to lead fulfilling lives and make meaningful societal contributions. Our programme centres on fostering self-leadership in our scholars, laureates and alumni, equipping them with essential skills for personal and professional growth. To this end, our key development areas are self-awareness, goal-setting and strategic thinking, accountability, resilience and emotional regulation, and proactive problem-solving.

Our goal is to develop self-driven, resilient leaders who own their decisions and actions. By mastering self-leadership, they'll thrive in their personal and professional lives, positively influencing their families, communities and world.



Principle 7: Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

DEIB is as a proactive investment in our organisation and our scholars' future. We prioritise transparency, accountability and intentionality, always asking, "What will make you feel that you belong?" Our commitment includes equal employment opportunities, valuing diversity within our workforce, and fostering a culture where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and support, while empowered to contribute to our shared success.

At the level of our partner schools, we address issues of power and privilege, advocating for schools to commit to and uphold DEIB to ensure that our scholars experience psychological safety and belonging. Insights from our scholars drive our efforts, as evidenced by DEIB surveys conducted in 2019 and 2022, which revealed key challenges within partner schools.

We intend to conduct our DEIB survey every two to three years to assess how our work with scholars, families, principals and school leaders has contributed to reducing discrimination and enhancing a sense of belonging for all. All feedback and results help to determine our advocacy efforts, programme inputs and support to scholarship recipients.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



DRIVING CHANGE: A DEEP COMMITMENT TO SCHOLARS

Lloyd chats with Nina, our High School Programme Curator

Nina is a driving force behind the High School Programme. Aside from her dedication to keeping the curriculum balanced – with academic rigour being as important as the development of soft skills – she is committed to engaging with the SBF scholars, especially during challenging times.

How do you approach the balance between academic rigor and the development of soft skills like leadership and emotional intelligence?

It's all about recognising that a scholar's journey is as much about personal growth as academic success. The teenage years are pivotal, full of both academic and emotional challenges. Our curriculum is designed to integrate learning opportunities that foster self-leadership, emotional regulation and Power Skills. Reflection is a big part of this – helping scholars connect their academic achievements to their personal growth. By celebrating their incremental progress, even when they face setbacks, we nurture a growth mindset and anti-fragility.

The educational landscape is evolving rapidly. How have you kept your skills relevant, and what's the most enjoyable thing you've learned in 2024?

Staying relevant requires continuous learning. For instance, I transitioned from being a Montessori preschool teacher to adapting to Google Suite

and online teaching when I joined SBF. Now, I rely on tools like AI to enhance my work. The most fun thing I've learned this year? Gen Z slang! Scholars have taught me so much, though they've made me promise not to use it publicly! It's been a light-hearted yet meaningful way to connect with them.

You're clearly passionate about student engagement. How do you connect with scholars, especially during challenging times?

Building trust is key. I spend time on the school campus weekly, offering scholars informal check-ins. A recent moment that stands out was with a Grade 10 scholar struggling with academics and personal challenges. I reminded him of his past wins, like his inspiring prep speech, and provided support like tutoring. Seeing him turn his challenges into opportunities – he even started a small business selling sweets! This was incredibly inspiring – these moments fuel my passion for this work.

It's deeply personal for me. I pursued a degree in social work to better my life and my children's education, and now I'm helping other youth navigate their futures. Seeing our scholars overcome challenges and grow into their best selves reminds me why this work is so meaningful. The collaboration with my colleagues and the scholars' resilience give me endless hope for the future.

THE SASLI JOURNEY: STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Lloyd chats with Nuraan, our SASLI Associate

Nuraan didn't just stumble into her role – her journey to SBF was rooted in a personal mission to bridge the gap between education and employability. When she was a young graduate, she experienced the challenges that South African youth face in transitioning from university to the workplace. Today, she's the engine behind the daily operations of SASLI, from tracking progress and managing communications to supporting alumni and interns.

"It's not just a job," she explains. "It's about being the bridge that helps graduates thrive in their first roles." This sense of purpose has fuelled her professional growth. Moving from intern to associate, Nuraan has embraced autonomy and taken the initiative to shape a programme that wasn't yet fully established when she joined. The opportunity to innovate and contribute her ideas has been as fulfilling as it has been challenging.

What attracted you to work with SBF and SASLI?

What drew me to this role was my own experience with how impactful support programmes can be for graduates. South Africa faces a youth unemployment crisis, and there's a significant gap between the skills graduates leave university with and what the workplace requires. I wanted to be part of the solution, helping bridge that gap and equipping graduates to thrive.

How has this role shaped your personal and professional growth since joining?

This role has given me a lot of autonomy and challenged me to be proactive and take initiative. Since SASLI was new when I joined, I was able to apply my previous experience to identify gaps and propose solutions. Personally, I've benefited immensely from being part of an organisation that stays at the forefront of industry trends, giving me the same valuable lessons we aim to instill in our laureates.

What inspired you to focus on leadership development for students, and how do you connect your personal values to SASLI's mission?

I've always been passionate about helping youth, which is why I pursued a social work degree. The high unemployment rate in South Africa makes youth a key focus area for me. I also relate to our laureates because I'm part of the same generation, which helps me shape ideas from their perspective. Creativity, quality, and innovation are core values for me, and they align closely with SBF's power skills and SASLI's innovative approach. It's been exciting to work on a new programme that allows us to push boundaries while maintaining a reflective and intentional approach.

What keeps you motivated in your work?

I find motivation in being part of an organisation that empowers youth to navigate life and work confidently. Seeing the impact of our efforts on laureates who go on to succeed is incredibly rewarding.



“South Africa faces a youth unemployment crisis, and there's a significant gap between the skills graduates leave university with and what the workplace requires.”

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



THE SASLI JOURNEY: EMPOWERING A GENERATION

Lloyd chats with Noxolo, our SASLI Coordinator

Noxolo has found that SASLI presents the unique opportunity to innovate and respond to the challenges that come with working with young adults. Communication with laureates stands out as a core challenge for her. Laureates prefer WhatsApp for its immediacy but tend to overlook formal channels like email. Recognising this, Noxolo and the team introduced a hybrid communication strategy, balancing accessibility while ensuring that they build laureates' professional competency.

Some laureates struggle to voice challenges or seek support when needed, but SASLI is intentional about creating a safe space for open dialogue. Group and one-on-one sessions encourage students to share their problems early, ensuring solutions are found before issues escalate.

Can you share a success story from the SASLI programme?

Dineo, a first-year laureate, has shown remarkable growth in self-management, resilience and critical thinking. She's fully embraced the SASLI programme, engaging with it and unlocking rewards each month. She's also taken initiative to secure funding and employment opportunities, demonstrating her ability to apply the lessons she's learned.

Her leadership shone at an SBF camp, where she volunteered and supported scholars with empathy and purpose. It was inspiring to see how this experience not only impacted the students but also boosted her confidence as a leader. Dineo's journey embodies the mission of SASLI – nurturing the next generation of leaders.

What challenges have you faced in delivering SASLI, and how have you addressed them?

We've faced three key challenges:

Communication: Laureates prefer WhatsApp for immediate communication, but we've noticed gaps when formal messages go unanswered. To address this, we've adopted a hybrid strategy, using WhatsApp for urgent communication and email for formal updates. This also helps laureates develop professional communication skills.

Building connections: Team changes can make laureates hesitant to trust new staff. We've focused on attending SBF events and participating in Theta Nathi sessions to build rapport and create trust through personal interactions.

Accountability: Some laureates miss sessions without explanation, or they hesitate to seek support when facing personal or financial challenges. We address with open communication in group and individual sessions and by encouraging them to share challenges early. Clear expectations and regular check-ins have been instrumental in promoting accountability.

What keeps you motivated in your work?

For me, it's the moments when laureates apply what they've learned to overcome challenges or grow in their leadership journey. Seeing their resilience and drive reminds me why we do this work – it's about making a tangible difference in their lives.



SHAPING FUTURES: REDEFINING SCHOLAR SUCCESS

Lloyd chats with Megan, our Head of Programmes

Megan's leadership in the SBF Programme shows the power of a holistic approach to education. As a key designer of our 7 Principles, she has redefined how scholars are supported, nurtured and prepared for the future.

Her passion for scholar development is rooted in the programme's foundational philosophy that scholars are future leaders, innovators and change-makers. The 7 Principles (see page 15) have become a cornerstone of this belief. "They guide us to think holistically, celebrating each scholar's uniqueness and ensuring every interaction adds to their journey," she shares.

By championing holistic development and fostering innovation through collaboration, Megan is not only shaping the future of the programme but also transforming the lives of every scholar it touches. Her work shows how education can unlock potential, create opportunity and build a generation of leaders ready to tackle tomorrow's challenges.

How do you define success for the programme, and how do you measure it?

Defining success has been a collaborative process this year. As a team, we've worked to define what success looks like for each of the 7 Principles at different stages of the Scholar Journey. For example, we've mapped out specific milestones for each year of a scholar's experience. Ultimately, success is about producing Alumni who are both economically and socially active. However, we also focus on incremental progress along the way, using stepping stones to assess how scholars are developing holistically. It's rewarding to see this intentional approach reflected in their personal and academic growth.

Can you share an example of an innovative partnership that has driven the programme forward?

A great example is the collaboration we've had with our Strategic Partnerships Manager, Minaz Munshi. Lately we've focused on integrating the Power Skills and Future World of Work principles into the programme. This has involved

exploring experiential learning opportunities for our scholars – things like visits to tech startups, team-building activities and initiatives like the AWS Skills Lab. Cape Town is rich with these opportunities, and it's been incredible to see how they've reshaped our High School Programme. We're empowering scholars to understand the disruptions shaping the world of work and what this means for their future study and career choices.

What keeps you motivated?

Two things really drive me. First, the belief that talent and drive are everywhere, but it's often access that makes the difference. The fact that we can provide that access and see the transformational impact it has on our scholars, laureates, and alumni is incredibly fulfilling.

Second, when I think back to my own school experience, I can't help but reflect on how amazing it would have been to have this level of support and opportunity. Knowing that we're providing this for our scholars inspires me every day, even through the challenges.



For both Nuraan and Noxolo, the heart of their work lies in the connections they build and the impact they witness. Nuraan's commitment to helping youth navigate the gap between education and employment is deeply personal. "I'm part of the same generation as our laureates, so I relate to their challenges and perspectives," she shares. Meanwhile, Noxolo finds motivation in the resilience and growth of the laureates she works with. "Every time I see a student apply the lessons they've learned and step into their potential, it reminds me why I do this work," Noxolo reflects. Together, they are helping shape the next generation of leaders: empowered, resilient and ready to make their mark on the world.



EXTRAORDINARY MINDS
EXTRAORDINARY FUTURES

