

data
driven
districts

DRIVING IMPACT, ENABLING CHANGE

Provincial Intervention Impact Report | Jan-Dec 2024



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





The 2024 Provincial Intervention drive marks a strategic evolution of the Data Driven Districts (DDD) programme, from enabling access to data, to proving how DDD (and specifically use of the DDD Dashboard) is driving systemic change in South African education. This new phase of our theory of change answers the critical question “so what?” by using insights to influence learner outcomes in real time.

Spanning 32 districts in seven provinces and reaching more than 100 000 Grade 12 learners, the Provincial Intervention drive was run in parallel with existing DDD support processes and activities. It builds on more than 12 years of work in establishing data-driven approaches, systems and tools in the local sector.

The results captured in this impact report demonstrate how data can shape targeted, effective interventions. They also reveal a growing behavioural shift among officials who now use data to plan, act, and track learner progress.

You hold in your hands an exciting glimpse of how DDD’s vision is coming to life in classrooms around the country, as we scale our partnerships, support network and funding.

Above all, this report showcases what is possible when social impact partners and government collaborate – pointing the way forward for extending these learnings to foundational grades and ensuring long-term, sustained improvements in education outcomes for learners and the sector as a whole.

We look forward to sharing our journey with you.

Catherine Nell

**Interim CEO: New Leaders Foundation,
DDD implementing partner**

AT A GLANCE

The DDD Provincial Intervention drive was a year-long support effort run in seven provinces across South Africa.

It used a three-pronged approach (mentoring, school support, district support) to train and capacitate officials, in order to embed a culture of data-led thinking and improve learner outcomes in underperforming areas.

394
provincial officials
participated, with
109 772
learners reached

Targeted
training
conducted
in seven
provinces

76
SESSIONS

328
HOURS

2 226
SCHOOL-BASED
TRAINING
ATTENDEES

Increased number of bachelor passes overall, with a 5% improvement in levels 1-3

(ie, learners historically achieving 0-49%)

9%

88%

23 of 26
districts met
the NSC target
pass rate of 85%

*(as targeted via the district
and school support efforts)*

Performance gaps
closed, alongside
greater use of the
DDD Dashboard

*(with 25% overall growth
in weekly submissions and
1 708 highly active users
from participating districts)*





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Defining success

OVERARCHING GOAL

To partner with Provincial Education Departments on a multi-level intervention drive throughout Terms 1-4 2024, that:

- proves DDD data use can improve learner performance;
- proves DDD data links directly to learners who need, and are reached, through interventions;
- enriches our understanding of how officials currently use data to support learners; and
- improves the effectiveness of interventions in the field by providing data, structure and expertise.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

REACH: # of learners reached during the year (aim: 100 000).

OUTPUTS: # of identified “underperforming” FET schools engaged with (aim: 1 535); # of PED officials & school management teams reached; # training sessions completed; increased data submissions; increased use of DDD Dashboard.

OUTCOMES: Improved NSC pass rates and subject performance; behavioural shift in data usage.

OBJECTIVES

To capacitate DBE provincial officials with training and data advisory services that help them to increase collaboration with, and reduce the number of, underperforming schools and therefore districts, as the result of improved learner performance. **To be achieved through DBE Mentoring (1).**

To reduce the number of underperforming schools by providing targeted training and support that enables them to improve overall performance and increase NSC pass rates to the national target of 85%. **To be achieved through support for Underperforming Schools (2).**

To deepen the culture and practice of data-led decision-making at district level, through increased learner and subject profiling that enables more effective targeted learner interventions, and ultimately overall performance improvement. **To be achieved through District Support (3).**

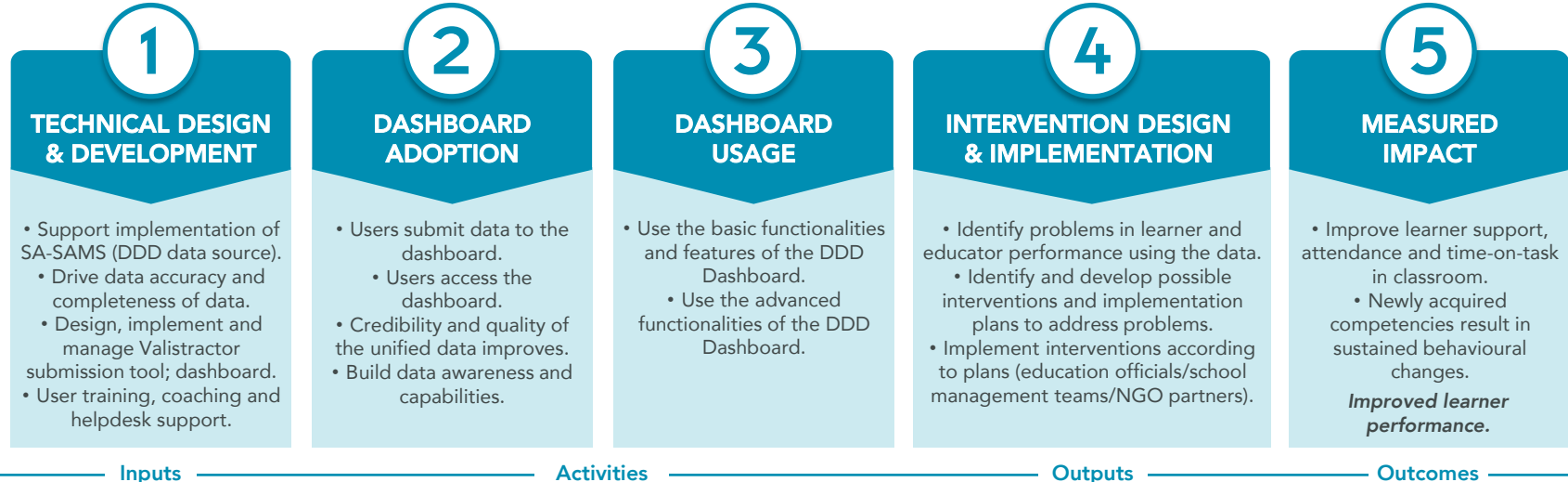


Defining success

Intervention efforts such as this one require a collaborative, iterative approach that balances impact and efficiency. Ongoing monitoring and measurement enables us to adjust our efforts throughout the process, thereby optimising changes in learner and educator performance, in line with **DDD's theory of change (below)**:

Key dependencies

- Intervention sign-offs from all Provincial Education Departments (PEDs).
- Templates to help collect all training and activity data.
- Fortnightly check-ins with all DDD programme and PED teams.





1. DBE Mentoring

OUR APPROACH

- Mentor and train PED curriculum, district and EMIS officials in **six districts** across two provinces (**Eastern Cape** and **Northern Cape**).
- Focus on districts with underperforming or declining secondary schools (with an overall NSC pass rate of 70%, and/or 10% or more drop in the prior 12 months).

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Phased training to promote DDD best practice and use (EC: Jan-Aug; NC: Apr-Oct).
2. Develop support framework and follow-through on training.
3. Identify pre-existing interventions that could be improved.
4. Collaborate with DBE-assigned mentors to systematically use DDD reports/data for interventions, planning, monitoring.
5. Collaborate with PEDs to identify champions and develop intervention plans.
6. Focus performance monitoring on Grade 12 Languages and top enrolled subjects (incl Mathematics Literacy).

TARGET: Improve and/or maintain NSC results and academic performance in historically underperforming districts, building on previous targets of 70%, and moving towards 80%. A secondary aim is to achieve 30% bachelor passes.

INSIGHT

Interventions and approvals take time: an early start is crucial.



ACTION

Initiate the intervention at the start of the year to align with district plans and secure early PED support (ensures officials' attendance and compliance).

Buy-in and support is exponentially improved when the initiative meets specific district needs and challenges.



Proactively identify bottom-performing NSC districts using G11 data and engage provincial heads and districts on how DDD can support.

Data discrepancies between the DDD and SA-SAMS can cause users to question data credibility.



Focus on circuit manager involvement and address data discrepancies and potential connectivity/access/resource issues at the start of the effort.

Training new officials/first-time users puts a lot of pressure on already stretched senior officials and/or advanced users.



Leverage Champion Principal and Master Trainer initiatives, plus post-event communication, to extend and reinforce training impact.



1. DBE Mentoring: Results



2023

NSC PASS RATE: 77,9%
BACHELOR PASSES: 11%

2024: 82,5%

14%

IMPACT ACHIEVED

- ✓ Five out of all six districts exceeded an 80% NSC pass rate.
- ✓ Four out of six showed greater levels of improvement (up to 7%) vs the national average improvement of 4,4%.
- ✓ Minor improvements seen in academic results (Math Literacy, plus Agricultural Sciences and Social Sciences).
- ✓ In both provinces, the learners “not achieving” in isiXhosa and Setswana Home Languages reduced by almost half.
- ✓ Up to 20% fewer learners finished in levels 1&2 (0-39%), with a proportionate increase in levels 3&4 (40% plus).



2023

NSC PASS RATE: 73,8%
BACHELOR PASSES: 7%

2024: 83,5%

13%

35

Training sessions

538

Officials attended

20 033

Gr12 learners reached

292

Highly active DDD Dashboard users in 2024

17%

Growth in cumulative weekly submissions to DDD in 2024

175

Total training hours



JTG school management team training, Northern Cape.



Amathole West special support kickoff meeting, in Eastern Cape.



Officials in Francis Baard District, in Northern Cape.



2. Underperforming schools



OUR APPROACH

- Capacitate PED and district officials in **19** districts across two provinces (**Gauteng** and **North West**), on how to leverage data insights to identify achievement gaps, and how to use data to assess the impact of the support provided.
- Focus on underperforming or declining secondary schools (with 10% or more drop in the prior 12 months).

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Phased training (GP: Apr-Oct; NW: Jul-Sep) targeting 181 schools, focusing on how to analyse Term 1&2 results to identify learners and subjects at risk; profiling Grade 12 learners using the FET promotions tool; and conducting trend analysis of school performance, focusing on Grade 12s.
2. Schools encouraged to prepare subject improvement plans prior to training. They were also asked to prepare a quarterly analysis to identify possible gaps and areas for improvement.
3. Performance monitoring focused on overall Grade 12 pass rate, languages and top 10 enrolled subjects.

TARGET: Improve school-based assessments and NSC pass rates at underperforming schools (secondary schools with 70% or less pass rate) by 5% vs the previous year; achieve an 85% NSC pass rate.

INSIGHT

Identifying learners at risk (level 1 and 2) is critical to providing timely, targeted support.



ACTION

Profile and categorise learners into groups based on academic performance, focusing on both low-performing learners and keeping top performers motivated.

Educator training needed for effective profiling and intervention strategies.



Districts to provide materials, monitoring, and feedback to school management teams post training.

More collaboration needed for sharing best practices and intervention strategies.



Actively involve district officials in providing feedback and content for improving classroom practices.

Improved computer literacy and awareness of “why” to use DDD is crucial for repeat usage.



Engage with key officials to confirm roles and responsibilities, align priorities, build capability and provide ongoing support.

Addressing technical challenges and ensuring data accuracy are key to maintaining trust and ensuring follow-through.



Engage with district management to align DDD support for Sec 58B schools in Q1 2025; identify opportunities to strengthen support and collaboration.



2. Underperforming schools: Results



2023

NSC PASS RATE: 85,4%

2024: 88,4%

*ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT: 0,24%

IMPACT ACHIEVED

- ✓ 90% of participating districts exceeded the 85% pass rate (17 out of 19 districts, vs only 11 in the previous year).
- ✓ Nine districts exceeded the national pass rate.
- ✓ Positive improvements were seen across more than 80% of subjects monitored.
- ✓ All districts improved their year-end results, with four achieving 5,6%-7,5% improvements on the previous year.
- ✓ Up to 46% fewer learners achieving level 1 results (0-29%) and up to 14% increase in level 4 results (50% upwards).



2023

NSC PASS RATE: 81,6%

2024: 87,5%

*ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT: 0,13%

* Based on an average of the difference between 2023 and 2024 final term 4 grades for the top 10 enrolled subjects.

10

Training sessions

144

Officials attended

15 800

Gr12 learners reached

813

Highly active DDD Dashboard users in 2024

46%

Growth in cumulative weekly data submissions to DDD in 2024

37

Total training hours



Underperforming schools engagement with Institutional Development Director, North West.



Underperforming schools intervention session, North West.



Sediwes Region (SW, SE & GW) Section 58B primary school principals session on learner profiling.



3. District Support



OUR APPROACH

- To capacitate provincial and district officials, focusing on school achievement, learner and subject profiling, in a way that triggers more informed, targeted interventions, across seven districts in **KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga**.
- To train circuit managers and school management teams, focusing on school achievement and FET promotion profiling.

KEY ACTIVITIES

1. Phased training (KZN: Apr-Aug; LP: Feb-Aug; MP: Mar-Oct).
2. In-person training sessions on how to conduct performance analysis at different achievement levels, including the Rapid Response (RR) approach.
3. Webinar training (learner profiling) for school teams.
4. Analysis, input and participation in provincial-district support and briefing meetings,
5. Focus on Grade 12 Home Languages and English First Additional, Mathematics and Mathematics Literacy, plus top enrolled subjects.

TARGET: Improve overall academic performance by 5% compared to the prior matric cohort, and achieve an 85% or greater NSC pass rate in participating districts.

INSIGHT

Resolving “unknown promotion status” issues in learner data is crucial to improve user trust.



ACTION

Provide escalated technical support and individual user support (helpdesk) throughout.

Ongoing virtual support is essential to keep users engaged, help them use DDD reports, and compile accurate analysis.



Training on learner profiling and developing relevant interventions for district management teams, circuit managers, curriculum and school management teams (primary and secondary) planned for Feb-Apr 2025.

In Mpumalanga, 75% of 120 responding schools say they have implemented learner profiling practices.



85% of secondary and combined school principals in the districts were trained for four hours on learner profiling. 13 webinars targeted all primary and secondary school management teams.

In Limpopo, nurturing collaborations with e-education enabled effective training support for circuit managers.



Activities to include meeting with FET and district management, conducting training, continue virtual support for RR and monitoring and evaluation. Will expand scope to other districts.



3. District Support: Results



2023
NSC PASS
RATE: 84,5%

2024: 87,7%

*ACADEMIC
IMPROVEMENT: 0,5%



2023
NSC PASS
RATE: 77%

2024: 85,3%

*ACADEMIC
IMPROVEMENT: 1%



2023
NSC PASS
RATE: 77%

2024: 84,9%

*ACADEMIC
IMPROVEMENT: 1,2%

* Based on an average of the difference between 2023 and 2024 final term 4 grades for the top 10 enrolled subjects.

IMPACT ACHIEVED

- ✓ Six out of seven districts met or exceeded the 85% pass rate, vs only one out of seven in the previous year.
- ✓ Five out of seven showed greater levels of improvement (up to 9,5%) vs the national average improvement of 4,4%.
- ✓ Districts in all three provinces experienced a 4-5% increase in the number of bachelor passes.
- ✓ All three also showed a substantial drop (up to 45%) in learners finishing the year in level 1 (0-29%) and up to 18% more finishing the year in level 4 and upwards.

31

Training sessions

73 939

Gr12 learners reached

1 938

Officials attended

603

Highly active DDD
Dashboard users

116

Training hours

24%

Growth in
cumulative weekly
data submissions
to DDD in 2024



Intervention support training, Mpumalanga (left) and Nkangala, Mpumalanga





Overall impact & observations



DDD DATA USE HAS IMPACT

The positive results indicate that training and support on how to use DDD to profile learner can influence the interventions created by officials and as a result improve outcomes for those learners.



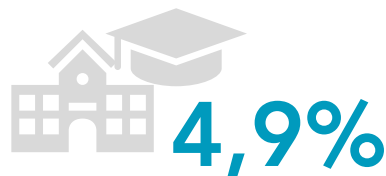
INTERVENTIONS MORE EFFECTIVE

In all participating districts, 2024 year-end results showed a significant increase in learners achieving level 3 or greater (40-49% and upwards), with proportionately fewer learners achieving levels 1 (0-29%) and level 2 (30-39%).



SYSTEMIC IMPACT ACHIEVABLE

Based on this evidence it can be speculated that the improved performance of these learners led to the increase in both NSC pass rate and NSC bachelor pass rates.



improvement in NSC pass rate (among participating schools, districts, provinces, with every single district experiencing an improvement)

9% improvement in bachelor pass rate across all levels.

5% improvement in bachelor pass rate across levels 1 to 3.



0,56%

improvement in overall academic achievement



23 out of 26

districts targeted through the underperforming schools and district support initiatives, met the target 85% NSC pass rate



Overall impact & observations

LAST PUSH: Pre-exam support

Over and above the three key initiatives, a “last push” effort provided targeted year-end support in specific subjects.

This “last push” included two district support meetings and 10 training sessions across the provinces, focusing on using FET Promotion Criteria to profile learners and ensure additional help was provided pre-exams.

VALIDATION: Control vs Treatment groups

It is important to note that the monitoring and evaluation approach used throughout this initiative included a comparative analysis of performance in targeted districts against selected control districts. This enabled the team to isolate any treatment effects (of programme activities) by controlling for other variables.

The analysis yielded a consistent result, so it can be safely inferred that any observed performance differences are likely due to the improvement activities themselves. This supports the hypothesis that performance gaps can be closed with intervention.

“I have been able to track the progress for individual learners and offer personalised support, leading to significant improvement.”

“We were able to differentiate our approach in class, and segregate learners according to strengths and weaknesses.”

“In term 1 we had six learners not meeting the promotion criteria; by term 3, we had only three.”

“Term 2 pass rate was 53%, increasing to 74% in term 3.”

While all three initiatives achieved positive results, the District Support efforts in KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga yielded the highest:

86%

of districts met the pass rate target; with

6,4%

improvement in NSC passes overall and

5%

improvement in NSC bachelor passes.

1,2%

While none reached 5% academic performance improvement, District Support had the most overall (0,71 %). Two provinces achieved 1% and 1,2% respectively.



Overall impact & observations



NSC improvement at a glance: All participating districts

PARTICIPATING DISTRICT	NSC 2023	NSC 2024
Johannesburg North	86,1%	89,5%
Johannesburg South	85,4%	87,7%
Johannesburg East	81,8%	88,7%
Johannesburg West	92,5%	97,0%
Johannesburg Central	83,0%	87,2%
Gauteng North	88,4%	89,0%
Gauteng East	83,0%	84,5%
Gauteng West	86,7%	88,3%
Tshwane North	86,4%	90,0%
Tshwane South	90,4%	91,7%
Tshwane West	84,1%	88,9%
Ekurhuleni South	86,0%	87,4%
Ekurhuleni North	82,0%	86,0%
Sedibeng East	83,7%	87,1%
Sedibeng West	82,9%	85,1%
Bojanala Platinum	84,2%	89,4%

PARTICIPATING DISTRICT	NSC 2023	NSC 2024
Dr K Kaunda	83,5%	87,8%
Ngaka M Molema	79%	85,7%
Dr RS Mompoti	77,2%	84,7%
Pinetown	85,6%	89,4%
Uthukela	82,9%	85%
Mopani East	77,3%	85,3%
Ehlanzeni	81,8%	88,4%
Gert Sibande	79,8%	87,7%
Nkangala	76%	85,2%
Bohlabela	69,1%	78,6%
Amathole West	77,6%	81,5%
OR Tambo Coastal	78,4%	84%
Sarah Baartman	76,6%	78,6%
Frances Baard	73,9%	84,6%
John Taolo Gaetsewe	73,7%	81,4%
Pixley-Ka-Seme	74,2%	85,4%



What next?

REFINE TARGETS

The targets set for academic performance were too ambitious and not met. **But positive growth was evidenced against all metrics.** The recommendation is to create sub-targets around areas of improvement that might be more attainable and will ultimately lead to improvements in top level metrics.

CHALLENGES FACED

- Many educators struggled to attend sessions due to schedule conflicts, workload, or lack of enabling technology (especially connectivity)/tools of trade.
- Concerns were raised about time needed for administrative tasks related to profiling and intervention planning.
- Some officials noted difficulties in implementing profiling strategies, eg, in large classes or with diverse learner needs.
- One must be mindful of the negative connotations associated with the term “underperformance”, as this may affect participation.

Recommendations and further support

- 1 Engage stakeholders for training and profiling in Q1 to align with district plans. Support from PEDs enhances attendance and compliance.
- 2 Proactively identify bottom-performing NSC districts using G11 data and engage PED Heads of Departments and districts on how DDD can support, based on lessons learned in 2024.
- 3 Relook district categorisation to mitigate against fluctuating or declining districts.
- 4 Track intervention workshops and training via the dashboard tool (potentially add checkbox to indicate “provincial interventions work”).
- 5 Explore additional training for both educators and school management teams on DDD and learner profiling.
- 6 Explore options for providing access to more resources, specifically access to materials for lower grades and tools to facilitate profiling.



Queries & contacts



IMPORTANT

The information contained in this document is based on a detailed project report outlining the work conducted throughout 2024, as well as a formal monitoring and evaluation report prepared by external experts.

For more detailed insights into any aspect, or for general queries, please contact New Leaders Foundation (DDD implementation partner) directly.

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THANK YOU