

Adopt-a-School profiles its star matriculants

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Pupils from schools supported by education NGO Adopt-a-School Foundation, shine in their 2015 matric examinations, rising above the difficult circumstances in their social and schooling environments.



Despite the average decline in national matric performance, Adopt-a-School is proud of the many matriculants from their adopted schools. These matriculants have, against many odds, performed well, achieving distinctions and university passes.

There is one distinguishing factor that separates these matriculants from their classmates: their inextinguishable thirst for learning, accompanied by a determined work ethic. Their X-factor is immediately recognised by their parents, their teachers and their peers and these young people, often surrounded by grinding poverty, a lack of resources and seemingly insurmountable disadvantage, will not be held back by their circumstances and are determined to realise their dreams.

Meet Dumisile Shongwe, the 23-year-old from Swaziland who took herself back to school after a five-year hiatus in which she worked to earn enough to rewrite Grade 11 and matric. Makhosini Buthelezi, headmaster of Vukubone Secondary School in Driefontein, Mpumalanga, said of his star pupil: "Dumisile is a brilliant learner - and is very successful at what she does. She knows what she wants in life, and makes a point of putting the building blocks in place to ensure that she gets what she wants." And what she wants is to be a Governor of the Reserve Bank. Dumisile Shongwe has achieved 75% pass rate with two distinctions and two merits.

Mbali Madiya and Phumla Maphumulo, both from King Shaka High School in Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal, have big dreams. Mbali wants to study Environmental Earth Science because she believes that all interactions between humans and natural resources needs to be rethought through. Mbali achieved her Bachelor Pass with three distinctions.

Phumla dreams of being a Marine Biologist and also earned a Bachelor Pass with two distinctions. Their teacher, Mrs Nomzi Dumisa, is as impressed with the girls' devotion to study as she is by their altruism and their desire to motivate other learners. Now that the exams are over, while other matriculants are taking a hard-earned rest, these young people have taken temporary jobs.

Siyabonga Shange, 18, dreams of being an inventor - which is why he wants to study electro-mechanical engineering. From Kwamashu, Siyabonga has taken a job mowing lawns and working as a gardener to earn himself some pocket money. "I can't ask my family for money. There is no money for them to give me! I have to earn money if I want to have it," he said over the drone of a lawn mower. His hard work in 2015 has earned him three distinctions and a Bachelor Pass.

Stephen Lebere, Executive Director of Adopt-a-School Foundation, says, "We are proud to profile these exceptional young adults, who represent many more matriculants who have overcome their very difficult circumstances and produced excellent results, competing with some of the country's top private schools. Over the coming weeks, Adopt-a-School Foundation will do a thorough analysis of the matric results in adopted schools to assess the impact made and where more focus is required."

Banyana Mohajane, the Foundation's Executive for Skills and Social Development, says, "What stands out among all of these pupils, is their attitude, their resilience and their accountability for their own futures. By taking responsibility for their

futures, they have taken every opportunity that has come their way and exceeded against many odds. We are proud to have contributed to enabling these learners on their journey to realise their dreams."

Below are 10 profiles that document the hopes and dreams of Adopt-a-School Foundation's Star Matriculants. Fresh from having written their matric examinations, these academically excellent learners describe where they've come from and where they're going.

PROFILES:

Name: **Zanele Dlamini**

Age: 16

School: Welabasha High School, Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: isiZulu; Life Orientation; Business Studies; Life Sciences

Zanele Dlamini is a bit of a child prodigy. At 16, she has been the talk of teachers and learners in the Empangeni district. She is so bright, and finds learning so easy, that her teachers insisted that she skip a year - she went from grade eight directly to grade 10!

Over and above achieving her Bachelor Pass with four distinctions, she also completed seven university modules for next year too. "I plan on studying medicine at UKZN, so I thought it would be a good idea to get a few modules in, among them chemistry, physics and biology."

But, she says, she didn't work so hard that she had no time to spend with her friends. "I find studying easy," she says simply.

Zanele has seven siblings - five of them sisters - and they all live with their parents. "We do everything together, my sisters and I. And we fight over everything - clothes, make up... everything."

Zanele's first love is radiography, but because of her age, 16, she was not allowed to apply for the 2016 intake. "I'm quite a determined person. I will study medicine and then work towards radiography when I'm older."

Asked if her parents were proud of her achievements, she said, "Yes, I think they are, but they expect even more from me."

Name: **Dumisile Shongwe**

Age: 23

School: Vukubone Secondary School, Driefontein, Mpumalanga

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: Maths Literacy; Life Orientation

University applications: She has applied to the University of Pretoria and plans to study B.Ed FET Phase, majoring in Economics.

"I have worked myself to the bone this year. I knew that I had one last chance so I took it. I expect great things of myself, and I think I will not disappoint myself," says 23-year-old Dumisile Shongwe. Dumisile achieved two distinctions and a 75% pass rate earning her a Bachelor Pass.

Dumisile is as successful in the classroom as she is on the sports field where she excels at netball. When she's not playing sports or chess, she takes time out to represent her fellow students as a member of the Learner Representative Council.

She admits that it takes discipline to keep all the balls successfully in the air, and says she has worked tirelessly throughout the past year. Her dream has been broken into bite-sized portions: she wants to start off as a teacher, during which time

she hopes to help motivate and inspire young women like herself. "But my ultimate goal is to work for the Reserve Bank, eventually becoming Governor. I will get my masters in economics while I teach to get ready for the move to the Bank." Dumisile wants to get South Africa out of recession.

When she was just six years old, Dumisile's mother died. "I never knew my father. I was raised by my gran and when she died in 2005, was sent away to boarding school. My sister and I had our education paid for through an international church fund.

Dumisile wrote her matric at St Michael's High School in Manzini in 2010. She applied for bursaries to study at university the following year, but was unsuccessful. Between 2011 and 2014, she worked, but was determined to change the course of her life. In 2014, she moved in with her unemployed uncle in Mpumalanga (they live off his disability grant) and went back into Grade 11, to better her marks to give her a better shot at university.

Name: **Mbali Madiya**

Age: 18

School: King Shaka High School, Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: isiZulu; Life Orientation; Life Sciences

University Applications: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Mbali Madiya wants to save the world. Literally. She hopes the hard work she diligently put in over last year will help her become an Environmental Earth Scientist. With three distinctions and a Bachelor Pass to her name, there is little doubt that Mbali is not capable of achieving her dream. "I have long wanted to be a hydrologist, to be involved with everything to do with water. In a world where the lack of water is a huge threat, I want to help find new ways to store water as well as to help people learn how to conserve water."

The secret to her success, she says, is that she worked consistently throughout the year. "I studied every day, woke up early and applied myself. I knew that this was going to be the most important year of my life so I cut out all distractions and buckled down to the work."

Mbali describes herself as a stay-at-home girl so it was no hardship not partying late into the night with my friends. Her teacher, Mrs Nomzi Dumisa, said Mbali was a hard worker, who also motivated other learners. "If you were to ask me what makes Mbali stand out, I would say it's her background. Her mother was a constant visitor to the school, always involved in her child's education."

Mrs Dumisa described Mbali as inquisitive, "Someone who asks questions. She was always ahead, wanting to know and why."

An excellent time-keeper, Mbali was punctual and kept her life simple - no boyfriends, no fancy hairstyles, no over-obsession with her cell phone. "She will succeed in whatever she does. She works hard at it."

Name: **Thuto Gabapethe**

Age: 17

School: Setswakgosing Secondary School, Morokweng Village, North West Province

Pass: Bachelor Pass

University applications: Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand; Medicine, University of Cape Town

Thuto Gabapethe wants to be a doctor. He was identified as one of the top students out of 122 Grade 12 learners at his school, and achieved a Bachelor Pass.

But life has been anything but plain sailing for this 17-year-old who describes himself as "garrulous" - a talker. He's always wanted to be a doctor, ever since he was a little boy growing up in rural North West. "I live with my mum and two siblings

and a niece, my sister's little girl. I love my family, and I love my community. That's why I've chosen medicine as a career - my deep and abiding love and empathy for my people. I watch such suffering, from the most simple of ailments to really serious illness and I want to reach out and help," he said.

But Thuto is not all books and studying. He's a dab hand in the kitchen and cooks and bakes with ease. He also loves cricket and occasionally you will find him and his friends on the dusty pitch they've carved out of the earth.

The deputy principal at Setswakgosing Secondary, Mrs Leah Jood, says he's always excelled, whether on the debating team or in the classroom, and has earned himself a slew of awards.

Name: **Tsholofelo Ndlovu**

Age: 18

School: Modilati Secondary School, Hammanskraal, Gauteng

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: English, Mathematics; Life Orientation; Accounting; Life Sciences; Physical Sciences

University applications: Medicine at both University of Pretoria and University of Witwatersrand

Tsholofelo Ndlovu blows air out of her nostrils when she describes her year. "Hfffff... It was a tough year. I made sure that I did not look up from my books. Not for the whole year," she says.

Tsholo's hard work paid off. She achieved six distinctions, which include Mathematics, Science, English and Accounting. Her choice of career seemed simple to her: Medicine was what she wanted to do.

But not just any branch of medicine. Tsholofelo wants to be a brain surgeon. "I've always been interested in how the human body works. It's an area of fascination for me: which part of the brain gets your eyes to turn left, then right... It's a mystery I want to understand."

She says she wants to help people, across the board, but mainly she wants to deal with the brain, and the mind. "You hear the term 'healthy body, healthy mind' all the time. I want to concentrate on the healthy mind/brain bit," she said.

Tsholofelo lives with her parents and her five siblings. "We might be poor, and we might not have much - but we love each other very much," she said.

Name: **Phumla Maphumulo**

Age: 17

School: King Shaka High School, Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: isiZulu; Life Orientation

University applications: A number of applications: (Land Surveyor, Zoology, B.Com. Accounting) University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, University of Zululand, University of Free State.

Main area of interest: Marine Biology

Phumla Maphumulo and her five brothers and sisters live with their grandparents, off the social grants they get from the government. "It's the one thing that I am grateful for every day: my wonderful grandparents, who raised me and my siblings, who support me - financially and emotionally - and who are my greatest inspiration."

Phumla is single-minded in her quest for self-determination. When, as she was planning her future, nothing jumped out at her as the one thing she wanted to do, she began investigating what area she would most likely find a job in. "I want to be a marine biologist," she said. "If you look at the industry, you don't find many black marine biologists. I want to be a pioneer. But more importantly, I think it is very rare to find a black woman marine biologist. So I think that by the time I have done with my studies, I will have a much better chance at finding a job than people who have chosen to do a non-specific BA degree."

Phumla's hard work this year has resulted in a Bachelor Pass with two distinctions. "I sacrificed everything! I had *no* holidays. I didn't even allow myself to visit my grandmother - my father's mother."

Asked if she'd allowed herself to have a boyfriend, she said with incredulity: "A boyfriend? In this year? Are you serious?"

When she's not hitting the books, Phumla and her friends spend time at the beach or in the malls.

Name: **Siyabonga Eugene Shange**

Age: 18

School: Inhlankanipho High School, Kwamashu, KwaZulu-Natal

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: IsiZulu; Geography; Life Sciences

University applications: Electromechanical Engineering University of KwaZulu-Natal

Siyabonga Shange achieved three distinctions and earned a Bachelor Pass. His mother, Nonhlanhla, thinks her son is "a very special child" and gets his love of studying from her. "I'm a workaholic. I love studying - I have a diploma in chemical engineering and a degree in quality management," she said.

Mrs Shange added that because she'd been unable to find work in her fields, she was diverting to education and currently studying through Unisa.

Siyabonga, like his mother, is determined to succeed. "I want to be an electro-mechanical engineer. I have always loved inventing new stuff, playing around with ideas of how to make things work - in a different way."

He says he worked "like a crazy person" last year. "I did not stop once, not to take a holiday, or to take a break. You get one chance at this. If you don't take it, you lose your place on the ladder and I'm not sure you ever get back on again."

And, while his friends are taking a break, Siyabonga can be found in Avoca Hills, mowing lawns and working as a gardener. "I need to earn some money. If I am accepted for electromechanical engineering at UKZN, I will have to support myself. I want to be a responsible person," he said.

Name: **Bonolo Mohutsiwa**

Age: 18

School: Setswakgosing Secondary School, Morokweng, North West Province

Pass: Bachelor Pass

University applications: University of Mafikeng

Bonolo Mohutsiwa is appalled by the poverty and the lack of facilities in her district. She wants to change that, which is why she has chosen to devote her life to teaching. Her matric achievement of a Bachelor Pass means that Bonolo will have many opportunities to succeed in her chosen career. "For me, it is not just a job. It's a calling. I want to teach mathematics. Actually, I want to do more than just teach mathematics... I want to teach girls that they too can study maths. For some reason, I found that my friends thought that maths was too hard. It's not. I want to show girls that."

Bonolo's family - her parents and three siblings - live in a small village called Bonabona in the Ganyesa district near Vryburg. She says she worked so hard during the year, never stopping to take a break that she has now allowed herself to "chill" with her family, at home. "My parents are unemployed. They survive on social grants. Things are very tough for us," she said.

But, she has faith. "I love church, and I love God. A lot. That is why I believe that things will get better."

Name: **Khensani Mathe**

Age: 17

School: Modilati Secondary School, Hammanskraal, Gauteng
Pass: Bachelor Pass
University application: Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University

Khensani Mathe wants to be a pharmacist. Or a dentist. But mostly a pharmacist. She can see herself behind the dispensing counter in a white coat, filling out prescriptions, helping people make sensible medication choices. It has long been a dream, something she devoted 2015 to. This devotion is what got Khensani her matric Bachelor Pass. "I had a hectic year. I kept my head down and just worked. Thank goodness I am friends with a group of girls who don't party. We're good girls," Khensani laughed.

An only child - her father runs a tavern in their village - she knows that she is her parent's hope of a better life.

As a reward for working so diligently in 2015, she joined her schoolfriends on a field trip to Cape Town.

Name: **Piet Monageng**

Age: 18

School: Modilati Secondary School, Hammanskraal, Gauteng

Pass: Bachelor Pass

Distinctions: Setswana; Mathematics; Life Orientation; Accounting; Physical Sciences

University application: University of Pretoria, University of Witwatersrand

Piet Monageng loves numbers. He's not sure why, but numbers make him happy. "There's something uncomplicated about numbers. They make sense and are logical," he said.

Maths is his favourite subject and he achieved a well-earned distinction in this subject, as well as in Science, Accounting, Life Orientation and Setswana.

He has chosen to do a degree in accounting because of his love for numbers, but also because he thinks that it is a way for him to help his family. "I want to go all the way with my accounting."

Monageng, his unemployed parents and four siblings all live off social grants. "Things are tough in the rural areas. People are suffering because there are no jobs. Because my parents cannot support me financially, I have had to limit the number of universities I applied to. Without financial help, I - like thousands of other recent matriculants - will not succeed."

On his way to Cape Town on a school trip, Monageng says all he wants to do is spend time at the beach. "I love the sea. I once saw it in Durban. But on this Cape Town trip, that is what I want to do... see the sea."

Adopt-a-School's association with the schools

Setwakgosing and Welebasha Secondary schools were adopted by the Industrial Development Corporation in 2011. Grindrod Logistics adopted King Shaka High School in 2009 and Inhlankanipho High School in 2014. Vukubone High School has received support from Kangra Coal since 2009. Modilati Secondary School has been supported by a number of different companies, including Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Wipro Technologies, ETC Solutions and Shanduka Foundation. All of these organisations have worked through Adopt-a-School Foundation and its Whole School Development programme.

About Adopt-a-School Foundation:

Adopt-a-School Foundation is a project of the Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation and was officially established in 2002 by a group of concerned individuals, including Cyril Ramaphosa and Dr James Motlatsi. The Foundation is registered as a Section 21 company with PBO status and has an Independent Board of Directors.

The Foundation works with a wide range of stakeholders, including: District, Provincial and National Department of Basic Education, corporate donors, various service providers and best practice NGOs. The Foundation implements Whole School Development - a holistic model aimed at improving the academic, infrastructural, social and security environment in schools.

There are currently 612 schools under the Adopt-a-School Foundation's adoption programme. The Foundation works in all nine provinces in South Africa, and in 2012 started working in Lesotho and Mozambique.

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