

# How to Leverage Data-driven Insights to Improve the Impact of Education Interventions



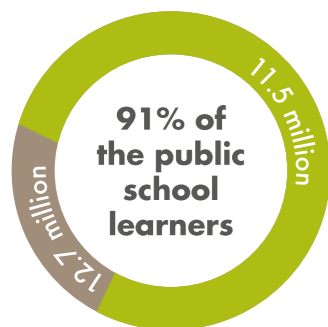
Despite significant public and private investment in education, poor learner performance in South African public schools remains a well-documented challenge. The quality of education interventions must be improved, and scarce resources must be allocated where they are most needed, if outcomes for the 12.7 million learners across more than 26 000 schools are to improve.

Making these decisions without credible data is difficult. In response to the need for quality data, the flagship Data Driven Districts (DDD) Programme was launched in 2013, in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. In 2016, funding from the First Rand Empowerment Fund

enabled the national expansion of the programme which is owned by and supports the DBE's collection and use of education data to help learners succeed, and it is provided free of charge to provinces.

Integral to the Programme is the DDD Dashboard, an intuitive online tool that aggregates and visualises school-level data from school information systems including the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS). Educators across the country can easily access the dashboard via the web or a mobile device. It visualises the data in an approachable way and simplifies analysis to make it intuitive for those who need it most – district officials, curriculum implementers and educators.

## The DDD Dashboard represents



## How access to quality data can be used to improve the effectiveness of education interventions:

- Use data to develop social impact strategies on where and how to best intervene
- Plan targeted interventions, leveraging data to roll-out to schools or learners in most need of support
- Design and implement Monitoring and Evaluation systems, to track progress, identify pockets of success and opportunities to improve
- Bring stakeholders together, through a common, data-informed understanding of challenges to quickly shift to finding solutions
- Build a data-driven culture to develop data analysis capabilities
- Empower principals, School Management Teams (SMTs) and teachers to achieve improved learner outcomes based on data-driven, easily digestible insights
- Develop early warning systems for highlighting areas needing support

New Leaders Foundation (NLF) has been working with education stakeholders nationwide to demonstrate how the dashboard builds data insights and helps translate insights into action.

Although the work started with the education sector, NLF demonstrated how the dashboard and DDD methodologies can provide significant benefits to CSI-funded programmes. One such programme has been the **Old Mutual Education Flagship Project (OMEFP)**, which brought together multi-disciplinary NGO service partners to address school leadership and curriculum implementation challenges in underperforming schools.

NLF, in its DDD Programme implementation role, was included as a service partner in the OMEFP in 2016 and quickly yielded benefits for the OMEFP and its service partners and schools.

For example, one of the OMEFP service partners, the SEED Educational Trust, is responsible for school leadership capability building with the School Management Team (SMT) at Madibong Primary School. Data played a pivotal role in planning a targeted intervention and empowering the SMT to implement these in critical areas. SEED's mentorship involved strengthening SMT management and leadership skills, which included performance analysis sessions on a subject and learner level.

The dashboard showed external assessment performance was lower than their school-based assessments (SBAs). With SEED's support, the principal and HODs used the DDD Dashboard to monitor subject performance and identify where the content knowledge gaps existed. This provided an objective basis for supporting teachers, who then responded vigorously to improve their performance, formulating interventions which produced impressive results.

DDD's highlighting of the difference in school-based and external assessments was a major learning for the school in terms of improving the quality of teaching. It showed where the gaps were and started the process for addressing the gaps. The improvement from this intervention has motivated teachers to work harder and achieve better results.

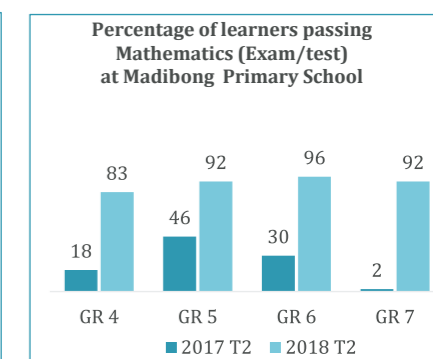
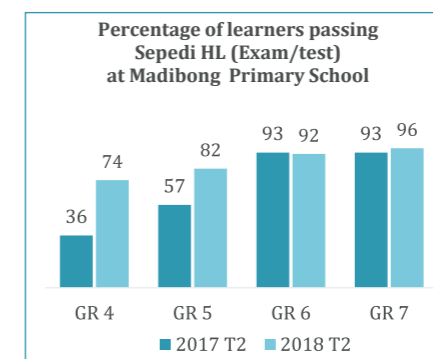
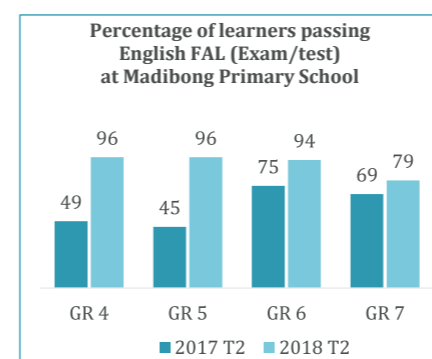
*Mr Malata, Principal of Madibong Primary School*

The improved results motivated teachers to engage more deeply with data and performance analysis, embedding a culture of data-driven decision-making in management and leadership practices. The school has since sourced external assessments from its own province and other provinces, such is their motivation to continue improving.

The graphs below show the marked improvement in English First Additional Language, Sepedi Home Language and Mathematics between term 2 of 2017 and term 2 of 2018 at Madibong Primary School.

The process of change is a long-term process but the DDD speeds up this process by making analysis easier.

*Henry Harman, SEED Management Mentor*



Source: Estimates from the Department of Basic Education

## To improve effectiveness of service partner interventions in schools, and meet the expectations of these service partners, the DDD Programme also allowed for:

- Controlled, direct access to **validated data** that is **easy to source for partners**, saving them time. (The DDD Programme uses state-of-the-art security practices to safeguard data.) The data can be used to:
  - Enrich the partner's reports to funders and other stakeholders, giving evidence of results.
  - Understand the context for support and better planning for targeted interventions.
  - Facilitate constructive conversations on challenges and efforts for improvement.
- Visual representations** of key **education metrics**, giving funders **increased visibility** of schools', learners' and educators' performance and enabling funders to play an **active role** in programme implementation alongside their NGO partners. Visual representations can be used to:
  - Account for funding disbursed with evidence-based results.
  - Improve collaboration with implementing partners to address underlying challenges.
  - Revise strategies to achieve greater impact.

**Data is enabling South African schools to unlock vastly improved results.**

As in the case of the OMEFP, the DDD Dashboard can be a catalyst to achieve excellent outcomes in education interventions.

Contact NLF's DDD team for support in your next education intervention and leverage the power of data!

Contact Peter Searle – Partners@newleaders.co.za

