

### STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The John Walton Alumni Association was formed to support John Walton Secondary School in its endeavors to effectively and efficiently execute its educational mandate. John Walton Secondary School is a historically disadvantaged school that is geographically situated on the border of two historically Coloured (Rosedale) and Black (Langa) townships. Due to the school's unique geographic location and a strong culture of teacher mentoring and leadership, the history of the school has been characterized by a progressively broad socio-political, socio-religious, and socio-sport development awareness. In this pursuit, the Alumni initiative finds itself dynamically challenged within the context of global and local educational demands.

Education systems and in particular basic schooling systems around the globe face all sorts of challenges that threaten the very essence of an educational and developmental ethos. The South African basic schooling system does not in any way escape this global malady. The South African context depicts high unemployment coupled with a nationally recognized skills shortage, and the reduction of poverty to ensure that South Africans receive a better educational start (Millennium Goal 1).

In May 2009, President Jacob Zuma announced that the national Department of Education would be split into two new ministries known as Basic Education and Higher Education and Training. The South African Communist Party Secretary General Dr. Blade Nzimande is the new minister of Higher Education and Training, while former Gauteng Education MEC Angie Motshekga now oversees the Ministry of Basic Education.

The Ministry of Basic Education's mandate is to focus on adult basic education and training in addition to primary and secondary school education. Higher Education and Training (DHET) will be responsible for all post school education, including tertiary education up to doctorate level, technical and vocational training. DHET also oversees numerous Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA's).

The responsibility of central government is to provide a national framework for school policy, but administrative responsibility resides with the provinces. Implementing power is further facilitated to grass roots level via elected school governing bodies, which have great determining power in running schools.

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Written by Administrator

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Generally, the South African schooling system makes statistically sense in the following way:

Total number of primary schools = 15358; with pupils = 6316064; with teachers = 191199 = 33 pupils per teacher

Total number of secondary schools = 5670; with pupils = 3831 937; with teachers = 128 183 = 29 pupils per teacher

Combined and intermediate schools = 5037; with pupils 2 253 216; with teachers = 74 843 = 30 pupils per teacher

Grand Total number of ordinary schools = 26 065

Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education's Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025 highlights the following critical and challenging areas for improvement:

### •Learners

They should attend school on time, every day and take their school work seriously. Learners should have access to computers, good meal, sporting and cultural activities. They should have respectful relationships with their friends and dependable teachers.

### •Teachers

They should be confident, well trained, and continually improving their capabilities. They are committed to giving learners the best possible education, thereby contributing to the development of the nation. Enjoy job satisfaction because their conditions of service are decent and their pay comparable to that of other professions.

### •School principals

Ensure teaching takes place according to the national curriculum. Through responsible leadership, they should promote harmony, creativity and a sound work ethic within the school fraternity and beyond. Also, diverse and dynamic changes within the educational context require principals to develop in particular management skills.

### •Parents

Parents should be well informed about what happens in school, and receive regular performance reports against clear set standards by schools. They should have the full

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assurance that they are listened to, and any concerns will be dealt with by education authorities at all levels.

- Learning and teaching materials

The provision thereof should be in abundance and of high caliber. Learners and teachers should have the necessary skills to optimally use latest technology, such as computers to access required information.

- School building facilities

Building facilities should be spacious, functional, safe and well maintained. All stakeholders should take care of their building and facilities because they take pride in their school. The Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga during a Business Breakfast on the 29 November 2010, invited business leaders to support the efforts of the South African government to address the following identified challenges with regards to the schooling system:

- Infrastructure provisioning
- Provisioning of Learning and Teaching Materials
- Provisioning of adequate furniture for all learners and
- Health and safety of learners through, inter alia, an adequate feeding scheme and recreational facilities

During the same event, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe stated that 'together we can do more' to succeed in overcoming the challenges facing the South African schooling system.

Amongst the steps to be taken highlighted by him to business, include the following:

- 'Supporting initiatives to improve the functioning of schools. In this regard, your contribution in improving school management and governance is highly encouraged'

- 'For those contributing resources towards improving school facilities and infrastructure, we encourage you to continue this vital contribution and urge you to target rural and township schools as well. These schools still lack critical facilities such as laboratories and libraries'

- 'Importantly, experience has proven that most learners cannot successfully complete their studies in the education system because of lack of funds. Funding, such as bursaries and scholarships for promising but needy students is a matter of critical importance for our country'

- 'Teacher development is another critical area that requires attention in this partnership we are developing so that they are able to deliver quality content effectively'

The John Walton Alumni Association has been established to support John Walton Secondary

School with the belief that 'together we can do more' fully endorsing the aforementioned broad areas for intervention identified by Deputy President Motlanthe.

The former Department of Education and the South African Institute for Advancement have developed a publication to support schools in setting up their own alumni association. Alumni are those people who have left the school with training, skills, expertise and experience and attributes that reflect the main purpose of the school. The alumni are important because of their knowledge and relationship with the school as the school's core stakeholder group, because the alumni form a crucial link between the school and the outside world. Former pupils manifest the school's record, reputation and excellence and are the living embodiment of the values and ethos of the school.

Alumni are the key product of the school, and their engagement with the outside world is expression of the skills, training and experience they gained at school. Alumni can make valuable contribution to the relevance of curricula, and their contributions to society reflect the commitment to service and community instilled at school. What pupils do with their education leaves a direct mark on society, and, in doing so, the school get recognition. Schools that continue to recognize and continue relationships with their past pupils share in the achievements of those pupils the school's greatness. Alumni therefore contribute their time, money and expertise to ensure better opportunities for the future generation of pupils. Alumni can collectively plough back into our communities and turn schools into excellence of education and training for future generation of pupils, with the much needed support they need to deal with the challenges of tertiary education.

The John Walton Alumni Association publically commits all its decisions and actions to the benefit of the school and all its learners. This initiative, the formation of the John Walton Alumni endeavors to partner with as many stakeholders as possible to ensure the full realization of government, public expectations and the actualization of dreams, visions and passions of learners beyond the stringent confinement of limitations.