



## Chief Evaluator's message 2025



Dear Reader

The past year has shown that, while some schools are successful, others perform poorly. To an extent this is inevitable, but the gap in achievement between schools serving similar communities continues to be too wide. This can be seen at Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 schools where, in some cases the education provisioning is good, with pockets of outstanding practice, while at others it is inadequate.

Evidence of the current performance of the Western Cape's public schooling education system, based on the school evaluations conducted, suggests that it is a system with many good and outstanding schools, on the one hand, and schools which require improvement, or are inadequate, on the other hand.

During 2025 ninety-seven (97) school evaluations were undertaken throughout the province – in every district, and at all types of schools. Only seven (7) were rated 'inadequate'. Twenty-five (25) schools were rated 'Good', and twenty-five (25) schools were rated 'Outstanding'. Schools rated 'Requires improvement' are on the cusp of being good schools. There were thirty-three (33) of them. The SEA undertook six (6) Rapid-Fire re-evaluations (RAFI's) to monitor implementation of

priority recommendations. One (1) evaluation was not rated – it was a qualitative evaluation (the SEA returns to the school to do a full re-evaluation in 2026).

On 29 November 2025, at a prestigious Certification Event held at the Sanlam Head Office in Bellville, the SEA officially certified schools as 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. Both the provincial Minister of Education Mr David Maynier (our Keynote Speaker) and Superintendent-General (SG), Mr Brent Walters, were in attendance to witness the certification of Western Cape schools. Who better to have than our very own Minister and SG championing the SEA? It was refreshing to have our stakeholders there too.

Certain no-fee and low fee schools continue to be outliers, providing outstanding education quality. These schools prove that quality education is not only possible but is also thriving. Resilience builds success as every challenge becomes a stepping stone to growth and innovation. It is at these schools where educators make a real difference as their impact multiplies within classrooms and communities. Two principals were recognised for their immense leadership in tough-to-teach-at-schools. Context matters.

At provincial level, the *quality of teaching* must be improved if literacy and numeracy targets are to be achieved. This is especially true for the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4, 5 and 6) and Senior Phase (Grade 7, 8 and 9). The province has many committed, highly effective principals, and teachers. It needs more. *Leadership of learning* must be improved if the province is to raise educational standards. Not enough principals monitor the quality of teaching in their schools. *It is upon these two imperatives that the policy agenda should focus to ensure that teachers – and, by extension, school leaders - are empowered to grow practically and continuously.*

The province is not yet at the level of achieving consistently good levels of performance which would match the ambition of the vision of the WCED, i.e., “*Quality education for every child in every classroom in every school in the province*”. Achieving this vision requires a sustained focus on improving educational outcomes for every child, particularly for those whose daily lives are characterised by high levels of deprivation (social, emotional, economic). There is still much to be done in many schools. Schools will do well to counter context (insofar as it is possible) without embracing context.

If schools are to transform lives through learning, they will have to look inwards (knowing themselves inside-out through effective self - evaluation), look outwards (learning from what happens elsewhere in similar contexts, to challenge their thinking), and look forward to the future and what it may hold for learners – and plan how to get there.

I am acutely aware that teachers working in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged and unsafe areas face enormous challenges. Schools often use the mantra “Maslow before Blooms” when referring to context. If learners’ basic needs are not met (as per Maslow) then Blooms will not matter – because the learner is not in a state to learn. Maslow is foundational (learners need to feel safe, supported and motivated) and Bloom’s builds on that foundation. Once a learner’s needs are met (Maslow) then Blooms becomes more useful for structuring and deepening learning.

The determinants of learning (e.g., going to school hungry, going to school in an unsafe neighbourhood, gangsterism, bullying) have a significant impact on children and young people's success in school and beyond school. The advantaged, however, do not have a monopoly on intelligence and poverty can never be an excuse for school failure. It is children who are socio-economically deprived and who face an almost constant threat of gangsterism and crime, and hunger, who need schools the most. The SEA has conducted evaluations at many schools in high density, socio-economically deprived areas which are beacons of hope to their children – where address is never used as an excuse. In many schools, high standards, and high expectations, prevail. The Pygmalion Effect must become a new mantra at schools where the determinants of learning impact negatively on outcomes.

As a result, continuing to transform lives by improving education in the Western Cape is a mammoth task. Bringing about equity and improving school quality is a key imperative of the educational landscape. Schools must be exciting and purposeful settings, offering outstanding learning opportunities for all. The work of the SEA continues to be motivated by the belief that every child has the right to quality education, regardless of socio-economic status. Low quality education cannot be a perpetual poverty-trap.

It is against this backdrop that the SEA's vision is to improve schools in the Western Cape through strengthening school accountability. At the heart of the SEA's evaluation of schools are three key questions: 🌀 How are we doing? 🌀 How do we know? 🌀 What are we going to do now? Good schools focus these questions on learning because learning is at the heart of good schools. Learning is a school's core business.

In a seminal research article written in 1999, Abelman & Elmore asked the key question:

***“When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?”***

The SEA aims to transform lives for every learner, in every classroom, at every school in the Western Cape. The SEA acknowledges that each school is different, and that different schools need different kinds of intervention and levels of accountability.

Although the SEA is functionally linked to WCED, it is independent of it. As a result, the SEA supports better education metrics, evaluation, and quality assurance systems and helps policymakers and practitioners use our reports, and data, for decision-making and accountability at all levels.

The South African model of education delivery is based on a Head-Office/District Office/School modality, where a reciprocity of accountability should prevail; however, the school remains the basic unit for the delivery of quality education and as a result, must be the primary place where leaders and teachers are held to account. The SEA acknowledges that reciprocity of accountability in education in the province is vital for school improvement. When SEA evaluations recommend improvement, however incremental, there exists a responsibility, from the education ecosystem, to provide additional capacity to produce the improvement required. Both an 'outside-in' and an 'inside-out' approach to school improvement is needed.

The SEA evaluates public schools (ordinary and special) and subsidised independent schools in the province. The SEA is in a unique position to see what is happening in classrooms, and at schools, and must use the evidence gathered to identify trends and highlight issues that must be addressed. In essence, SEA evaluations are schools in a mirror. It also stands to reason that evaluations can ventilate good practice from which other schools can learn.

The SEA is a values-based, transparent, and accountable authority where children and learners come first and where standards are rated (and findings reported to the public) without fear or favour. In addition, the SEA's policies, findings, and insights will be evidence-led. SEA evaluators act with integrity and impartiality. The SEA is accessible to, and engaged with, our different audiences in different contexts so that we can better understand their needs and always act in the best interests of our learners.

The SEA's role remains to improve lives by raising standards. It is born of a vision of improving schools through strengthening school accountability. Our children deserve a world-class education. It is incumbent on all schools to be the hope that delivers this to our children.

I look forward to 2026 when a further 130 schools will be evaluated. The best part of this job is getting to meet so many principals and teachers who always welcome us warmly, and who often look forward to our reports, so that they can start a new journey towards making more of a quality impact.

Warm regards



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