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I am not self-sufficient alone. We are self-sufficient in community. Through our service we show our solidarity. We enjoy the same quality of service. We are connected through our caring. The beating heart of our country is a community. That has all the enablers of modern life.

”

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN / VISION 2030

**Partners for Possibility (Pfp)** is a creative solution to South Africa’s education crisis - it is a co-action, co-learning partnership between School Principals and Business Leaders, enabling social cohesion through partnerships, and empowering Principals to become change leaders in their schools and communities. The **Pfp** Programme facilitates cross-sectoral reciprocal partnerships between Business, Government and the Social Sector.

## At a glance

- Proud tradition and rich history dating back to 1954.
- Athlone Institute first occupied the historic building (1926).
- Noorder-Paarl enjoys a learner:educator ratio of 30:2.
- Offers a broad curriculum, including subjects such as Accounting, Mathematics and Physical Sciences.
- Extra-mural programme includes all the summer and winter sporting codes.
- Geographical location offers both a challenge and an opportunity.
- School accommodates 1240 learners; 41 educators; 7 support staff; 1 sports administrator, and a youth worker. It also offers 2 feeding schemes.
- Noorder-Paarl Secondary boasts alumni High Court Judge Chantal Fortuin; Paarl Hospital Superintendent Breslo Kruger; and Peter De Villiers, among others.

## MAPPING RESOURCES

Principal Darryl Mathys and corporate leader, Brian Abdoll initiated their **Pfp (Pfp)** collaboration in March 2015, and immediately embarked on identifying issues that needed attention.

In developing a Partnership Plan, they realised that having students in physical attendance is vastly different from being present, with the discipline required to learn.

As a result, the core focus was to revive the school’s excitement about education, and bring a fresh perspective to the teaching process itself.

To align this with the needs of the current economy, the strategy considered the incorporation of an IT vision.

At Sanlam, Brian had solved many complex problems, and set about incorporating these methods on the way forward:

“We usually first do an analysis of key issues, look for low-hanging fruits, then develop a road map, but engaging in school issues was not as simple as that. I needed to learn very quickly that **Pfp** already had tried and tested tools. So I looked to applying these in the set-up instead.”

*Sanlam Partner Brian Abdoll*

Following the **Pfp** process required assessing the relationship, asking the right questions and learning to ‘listen.’ According to Sanlam Partner Brian, this meant: “Out with Sanlam book, and in with **Pfp** book.”

Darryl's key focus was to develop and produce productive and employable youth who could contribute to SA's economy as school-leavers. In order to proceed, they isolated 2 key goals:

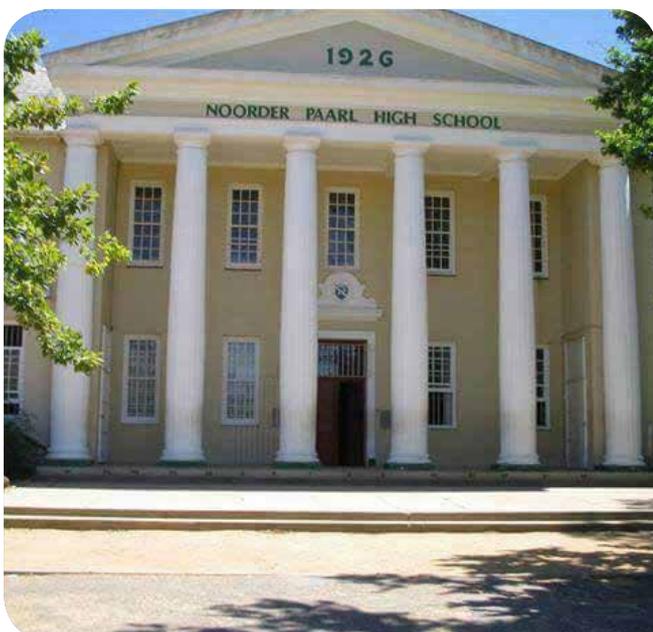
- Get the School Management Team (SMT) behind the Principal's vision: To build and support learners to grow into responsible, self-driven adults, and;
- Leverage this support towards education. (Not only data and fast-processing of numbers, but integrating it into the education process itself.)

Given the rate of youth unemployment in SA and the mammoth task at hand, Darryl realised they needed a strong, motivated team. Brian leveraged his networks and brought in Shamiema McCleod, respected leadership trainer to facilitate two workshops, founded on principals of Carl Jung. She assisted the School Management Team to undergo psychometric assessments designed to identify their key strengths.

The make-up of the team revealed an excellent balance of implementers and analysts, with equally dedicated energy to bring about the changes required.

This recipe for success was the foundation from which the School Management Team developed their strong points.

For the IT strategy, Brian brought in Mr Dale Simmons, Head of MiDO technologies from Jamestown, in the Western Cape. Mr Simmons focusses on empowering communities through the communication power of information technologies.



## ECONOMIC EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

It was essential to ensure that the leadership was adequately capacitated, and understood how best to integrate the process.

Alongside Darryl and the Senior staff, together they ran through the challenges of moving learners from simply having a device, to engaging with it in a different way through teaching.

A steering committee was established to take ownership of the Plan and develop a roadmap for the incorporation phase.

They tackled the task by working simultaneously on the support element, as well as integration of the strategy into the education practice itself.

“...our quest is not one of competitiveness, but of developing and attracting learners who can exit the school as employable youth who can make a valuable contribution to the country's economy.”

*Sanlam Partner Brian Abdoll*

“Providing an excellent product with a unique differentiator - in this case IT - serves the long-term vision of Noorder-Paarl Secondary to return to being the most diverse school in the region.”

As a business partner, Brian believes that with **PfP**, it is imaginable to address the stark divide between institutions just 1km apart.

Speaking of better resourced school neighbours, his question was not one of competitiveness, but of developing and attracting learners who can exit the school as employable youth, able to make a valuable contribution to the country's economy.

This is particularly evident in his focus on understanding the value of IT. The Partner explained that adoption is crucial to a plan of this nature. As a result, a key outcome of the strategy was to establish IT Clubs, where students could work together and learn from one another. ■



## THE PRINCIPAL:

### Darryl Mathys

Mr Darryl Mathys joined Noorder-Paarl High in January 2013 as an outsider to the community, having previously worked as a teacher and Deputy Principal in Mitchells Plain for 23 years.

"I was overcome when I learned about the proud history and tradition of the school. For years it was a top performing institution, until change in democracy in 1994 when the school's demographics expanded to include learners from surrounding farming areas and informal settlements."

Having experienced working amid challenges of poverty and inequality in Mitchells Plain, the Principal explained that attendance is one thing, but getting students to learn was another.

As a result, discipline was his first focus towards ensuring effective learning and teaching. In the beginning, this required facing substantial opposition in moving the parents, teachers and community out of their comfort zones.

Darryl seized the PFP partnership opportunity 3 years into his tenure. He knew this was his chance to fully embrace his role as Principal, and take the school forward as a true leader.



## THE PARTNER:

### Brian Abdoll

Group Information Consultant at Sanlam Ltd, Brian Abdoll is the son of a Principal, and no stranger to the profession. He understands that any parent ultimately faced with the choice of a good education or an "abundance of soccer fields", would go for the education option without question.

"I want Noorder-Paarl to reclaim its heritage as the school of choice for all parents in Paarl. PFP advocates that the gap between privileged and less privileged will never be closed unless we begin to change our thinking about teaching in South Africa."

It's a huge task given the challenge faced by many of the country's schools, but Sanlam Partner Brian Abdoll believes that, through partnerships, the schools can rise up and close this gap. Brian told PFP that his year in the partnership exists of breaking down a mammoth task into small parts.

