

FEM Education Foundation Collaboration for educational change

The FEM Education Foundation (FEMEF) is an NPO established in 2016 as a landmark CSI initiative by the Federated Employers Mutual Assurance Company (RF) Proprietary Limited (FEM) and its policyholders. It focuses on making meaningful, positive, systemic change in education and leadership in South Africa.

The foundation partners with and supports projects with the potential and capability to shift the public education system. Below, we highlight our established, long-term partnerships with eight carefully selected NPOs. Each has a unique area of specialisation and is an expert in their field. This ensures that FEMEF has a meaningful impact and initiatives are not duplicated.

Citizen Leader Lab Empowering school leadership and management

Citizen Leader Lab's primary focus is social change in basic education. Its award-winning principal leadership development and support programme, *Partners for Possibility* (PfP), leverages the capacity of business leaders to support schools' effective operation.

Principals and business leaders partner in a structured 12-month co-learning and co-action leadership journey. The principal, school and business leader all benefit. School improvements include better culture and functioning; increased engagement of educators, learners and parents; and greater access to social capital. This leads to improved learner outcomes. Since 2018, more than 500 principals and schools have benefited from the partnership between Citizen Leader Lab and FEMEF.

In 2024, Citizen Leader Lab will refresh the PfP programme, which will become known as *Leaders for Education*. This forms part of its strategy to deepen impact in education. A new collaborative project is planned to increase support to principal alumni driving literacy improvements.

Columba Leadership Awakening the leader within to change lives and their communities

Founded in 2009, Columba Leadership is an award-winning values-based leadership NPO that partners with the Department of Education (DBE) and government high schools. Columba's objective is to turn learners into responsible, resilient leaders who lead change in their lives, schools and communities. It has worked with more than 11 000 graduates from 277 schools. FEMEF has been a major funder of Columba's programmes since 2017.

There is evidence of deep impact on a national scale: Columba's programmes change the lives of youth by improving life skills, education and vocational outcomes. Principals and educators are

capacitated to embed values and youth engagement, while youth are enabled to express their leadership and be positive role models in their schools and communities. School culture improves, with a ripple effect in homes and communities. Statistics show Columba graduates are more likely to complete matric; outperform academic peers; hold leadership positions; and be in employment, education or further training after matric.

With a vision to ignite a values-based movement for meaningful change in South African communities, Columba will continue to network and amplify its inspiring action, building on impactful residential leadership academies, educator empowerment, school-based leadership development and support for leadership through service to address social issues in under-resourced communities.

Funda Wandé Enabling literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase

Funda Wandé is dedicated to implementing evidence-based interventions that improve foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) outcomes in quintile 1 to 3 schools. Its mission is to ensure that all South African children can read for meaning and calculate with confidence.

The organisation provides comprehensive training for teachers, coaches, teacher assistants and subject advisers; and offers capacity building and support to enhance learning outcomes. Since 2019, Funda Wandé has enjoyed a vital partnership with FEMEF. Funda Wandé has proved that the combined approach of teacher coaching, teacher assistants and a structured programme can achieve impressive results. Teaching assistants contributed to a 129% improvement in literacy and a 124% improvement in numeracy over a year. Using high-quality, curriculum-aligned resources resulted in a 59% enhancement in literacy and a 65% improvement in numeracy within the same time frame.

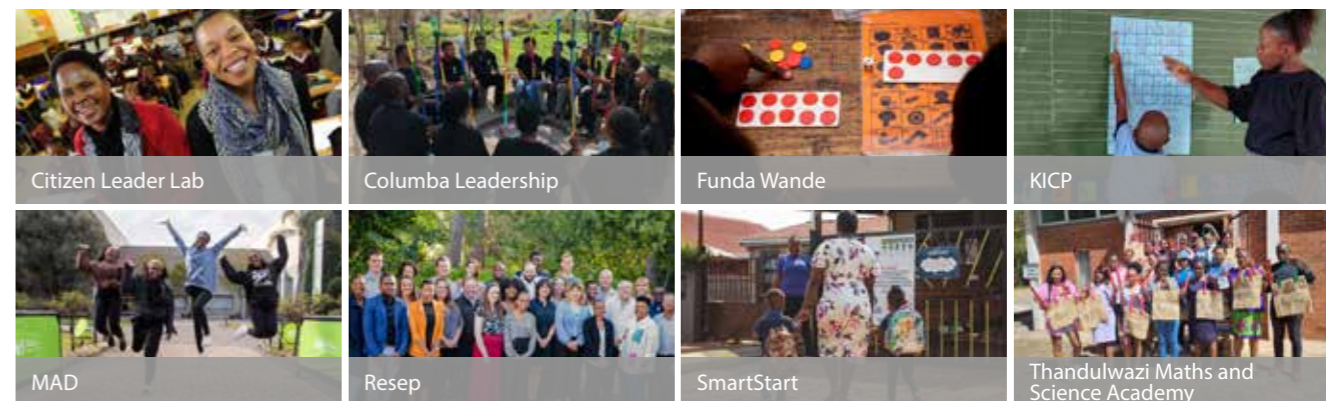
The next phase involves scaling up interventions and fostering greater government engagement. Funda Wandé plans to adapt its materials in additional languages and maintain its commitment to rigorous research production. It will continue to advocate for evidence-based strategies to improve FLN while working closely with the DBE.

Khanyisa Inanda Seminary Community Projects (KICP) Creating teacher capacity

KICP's Initial Teacher Education programme responds to the need for an innovative teacher development pathway for aspiring teachers. The KICP-FEMEF Initial Teacher Education Project in Ndwedwe is supporting a new generation of educators by improving foundational learning skills, digital teaching and learning (DTL), and cultivating trauma-informed practitioners. The project currently impacts 30 teacher interns, 143 teachers and 4 516 learners at eight schools. FEMEF, a committed partner since 2022, plays a pivotal role in sharing KICP's vision.

KICP's strategy encompasses the elements of social emotional learning (SEL), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) alignment, summits, workshops and mentoring. The project has significantly contributed to improving foundational skills, successfully integrating DTL in rural spaces and co-creating child-centred classrooms. Twenty teacher interns will graduate from the project, ready to contribute to the educational landscape.

The project envisions a future where new Foundation Phase teachers are equipped to teach reading, writing and numeracy with depth and meaning, ultimately catalysing transformation within South Africa's education system.



Make A Difference (MAD) Leadership Foundation Access to quality education for deserving learners

MAD Leadership Foundation has partnered with FEMEF for seven years, aiming to dismantle barriers to quality education. The initiative focuses on youth aged 13 to 23 from marginalised communities, who bear the brunt of significant disparities in quality and access to South Africa's education system.

Through scholarship support from high school to tertiary education, the programme emphasises personalised support and development – financially, academically, personally and in leadership. This enables scholars to focus on overcoming the foundational gaps in their education and allows them to realise their potential.

Since the foundation's inception in 2003, 485 scholars have received support. Boasting a 100% matric pass rate, 282 scholars have completed matric, and 170 have graduated from tertiary institutions. The graduate support programme prepares graduates for the world of work and helps them transition from tertiary studies to employment.

The projected 171% social return on investment for graduates over 10 years underscores the programme's transformative impact. This benefit extends to their families and, ultimately, to society. By equipping scholars with education, resilience and leadership skills, the programme catalyses upward social mobility, stimulates economic contributions and fosters societal upliftment.

Research on Socioeconomic Policy (Resep) Understanding the economics of education

Resep comprises a network of scholars and students interested in issues of poverty, income distribution, social mobility, economic development, social policy, education and health. The team, led by Prof Servaas van der Berg since its formal establishment in 2008, is based at the Department of Economics at Stellenbosch University.

Resep conducts research and advocacy on several social issues facing South Africa. A key highlight was when Resep brought national attention to the problem of children failing to learn to read for meaning before the end of grade 3. In 2023, Resep hosted its annual Quantitative Economics of Education conference with 100 participants. It co-hosted a public lecture and two policy workshops, sharing new research with national and provincial education departments and other policy stakeholders. The research mainly focused on teacher supply and demand issues and pandemic-related learning loss. Resep's researchers contributed towards the World Bank's report on Public Expenditure and Institutional Review of Early Childhood Development.

These efforts underscore Resep's commitment to tackling critical educational and societal challenges. Resep will continue to actively participate in the economics of education in South Africa by helping to graduate well-rounded, curious and passionate PhDs focused on this field.

<https://www.fem.co.za/fem-education-foundation/>

SmartStart

SmartStart, established in 2015, aims to close the gap in access to quality early learning for all children in South Africa and potentially beyond it. The partnership with FEMEF began in July 2021, with FEMEF funding key focus areas of early childhood development, and teacher skills and capacity development.

The premise for SmartStart's model is that this kind of population-level change in access to early learning requires intentional strategies to enlarge the early learning system capacity, while improving learning quality in all learning sites. The economics of a scaled delivery solution should also address the fact that children from low-income communities constitute about two-thirds of the total early learning gap. SmartStart chose a social franchise model as the vehicle for its vision.

SmartStart acts as platform orchestrator, designing and enabling the operations of an end-to-end, non-state delivery system, which speaks directly to the state-provided regulatory framework. This includes a practitioner recruitment system, managed set-up, support and tools for regulatory compliance, a locally appropriate curriculum, robust quality assurance systems, and a trusted co-owned brand that activates demand and supply. This approach has enabled SmartStart to scale from zero to almost 9 000 early learning franchisees in just seven years, reaching over 67 000 children every week.

Thandulwazi Maths and Science Academy Improving teacher quality through initial teacher education

Thandulwazi aims to provide well-trained Foundation Phase teachers who positively shift numeracy and literacy levels. It partnered with FEMEF in February 2022 and operates in the Waterberg District in Limpopo.

Beneficiaries are completing a BEd Foundation Phase degree and funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Ideally, the project enrolls candidates in their second year of study. They are placed in functional public schools and paired with experienced teachers who act as mentors. They receive holistic support including a monthly stipend, study supplies, psychosocial support, professional development and university fees.

Key programme objectives are to help the interns complete their degrees within four to five years; improve their academic performance; familiarise them with professional teaching and school environments; and ensure pedagogical knowledge transfer, skills and professional working attitudes. Interns will graduate as resilient professional teachers. In 2022, 20 people were enrolled in the programme. Education stakeholders speak highly of them and the impact they have made. The envisioned long-term impact is to address both teaching quality and teacher shortages.

