

15 Years *of* Impact



**Columba
Leadership**
Leaders. Change. Futures.



Awards:

Goldin Foundation
Excellence in Education
Top 3 Finalist Best NGO
CSI Legacy Awards

Annual Report 2024/25



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CEO Reflections

In 2024, we celebrated Columba Leadership's 15th anniversary—15 years of awakening the leader within. Fifteen years of witnessing the value created for individuals and schools when human potential is unlocked, agency is ignited, and people are truly seen, heard, and cared for.

Our journey began in 2009 with pilot academies at two schools. We watched with interest as youth and adults partnered to drive meaningful change in their schools and communities—surpassing even our own expectations.

These pilots affirmed the power of values-based leadership and the importance of engagement in schools to develop people and strengthen schools. Since then, Columba has worked in 316 high schools across eight provinces.

Resilience has been essential—not only for those we serve, who face systemic challenges in under-resourced communities—but also for NGOs like ours, navigating a complex and often volatile economic and socio-political landscape. In 2024, we encountered funding delays and were forced to restructure and reduce our academy target to 42. Yet, we continued our work in 119 schools across seven provinces.

True to the spirit of “seeing opportunity in challenge,” we also used this time to pilot new approaches. In 2024 Columba demonstrated its ability to innovate and add value beyond the core school programme.

Our consistent, proven impact on youth outcomes as well the positive effects we have witnessed with adults continues to drive us. If the model works, then more people should benefit. The question is: how do we expand access to Columba experiences in sustainable ways? What else can we do to ensure sustained impact?

In response, our team has rallied around a renewed vision—broadening reach and impact through innovation and adaptive programming, while also strengthening diversified revenue streams to ensure long-term financial sustainability. 2024 marked real progress on both fronts, with further detail provided in this report.

By year-end, there was a strong sense that Columba had entered its next phase of evolution. We are excited for what lies ahead.

In these uncertain times, the loyalty of our funders is deeply valued. We are honoured by their continued belief in the impact of our work.

I extend my gratitude to our Board of Trustees and our Chair Graham Lurie for their ongoing guidance and support.

Columba delivers on its mandate through our team's deep and passionate commitment to serving the incredible potential we see in people every day and their hunger to make a positive contribution to our country. The Columba heart and spirit is evident in all we do. Thank you Team.

Finally, to our alumni—both youth and adults—you continue to inspire and challenge us. You push us to be our best, to remain relevant, and to deliver with purpose. You help us understand the long-term impact that we are co-creating. You are the active citizens, character-filled, enterprising individuals, passionate educators and responsible leaders South Africa needs. In acknowledgment of our alumni and school partners and the 15-year milestone, this Annual Report shares a few legacy stories.

Tracy Hackland



OVERVIEW AND IMPACT

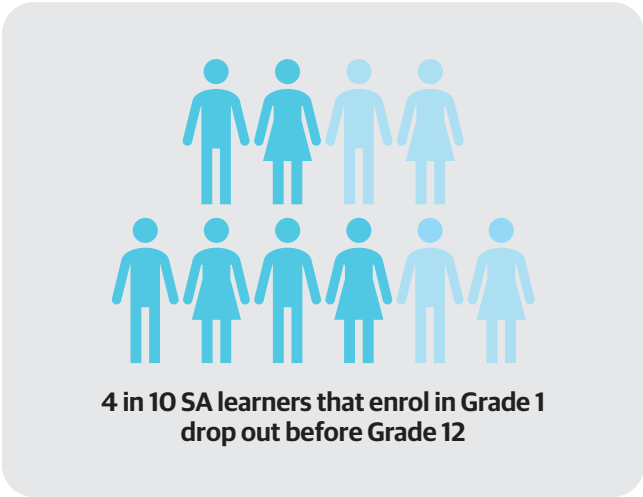
Our Work in Context

The Youth Bulge

The youth bulge in South Africa with youth accounting for 33,4% of our total population can be a source of great concern or an enormous asset. Well educated and future-ready youth prepared to lead themselves, communities and the country could be an advantage in a world marked by aging populations.

Concerning Degree of School Drop-Outs

Despite the South African government investing 13.7% of the consolidated government expenditure of R2.3 trillion (2024/2025) in Basic Education, 4 in 10 learners that enter the schooling system in grade 1 will drop out before completing grade 12 (matric). The drop-out rate in the senior grades can be as high as 50%.



Youth Unemployment

Combined with the staggering national unemployment rate (33.5%- Labour Force Survey Q2 2024); learners who do not complete school are most at risk of not securing training or employment opportunities.

Vulnerability in the Education Sector

South Africa's education system is under immense pressure. With nearly half of the country's teachers

considering leaving the profession due to violence, exhaustion, and unsustainable workloads, the warning bells are loud and clear. For many, the emotional toll of working in under-resourced, high-stress environments has eroded their sense of purpose and their ability to stay.

Under-Resourced Schools in Under-Served Communities

Schools situated in under-resourced communities bear the brunt of inequality, poverty, overcrowded classrooms, educational gaps and a range of social issues that get dragged in from homes and communities.

A Missed Opportunity

While it is widely understood that the more holistic development of youth is of critical importance, this holistic development is often lacking. Too often violence, behavioural issues, absenteeism, late-coming, and bullying are present.

Responsible, competent and ethical leadership is critical for taking our country forward and strengthening the schools that serve the majority of our learner population.

Big issues require shared leadership and positive peer to peer influence but too often and youth leadership structures in the school are often poorly developed and leveraged as a key support structure to school leadership and educators.

Effective engagement of youth can have the double benefit of strengthening schools and reducing the pressure on educators and helping youth develop skills and capabilities that can contribute to success post school. Yet it is not yet commonplace for principals and educators to be capacitated to ensure that youth leadership and meaningful engagement is well supported and prioritised in schools.

Who We Are

Vision Statement

Ignite a movement for meaningful change in South African communities which is driven by our network of values-based leaders.

Purpose Statement

Awakening the Leader within to change lives and their communities.

Core Values



Our Offering

A suite of values-based leadership programmes which:

- Transform adults and youth into responsible leaders that make a difference through self-leadership, social contribution and values.
- Transforms schools into places that nurture the potential of people and create space for shared leadership, youth engagement and values.

“Working in schools in some of South Africa's most challenging neighbourhoods, Columba Leadership transforms the way in which staff and students see their role in improving school life for everyone. With 'engagement' being such a critical driver of a school's success, Columba brings each of a school's stakeholder groups together. It helps them align towards common goals while setting them up for a lifetime of leadership outside the school gates.”

PETER CUNDILL FOUNDATION (UK BASED. LEGACY FUNDER)

Our Footprint and Track Record - Making it count!

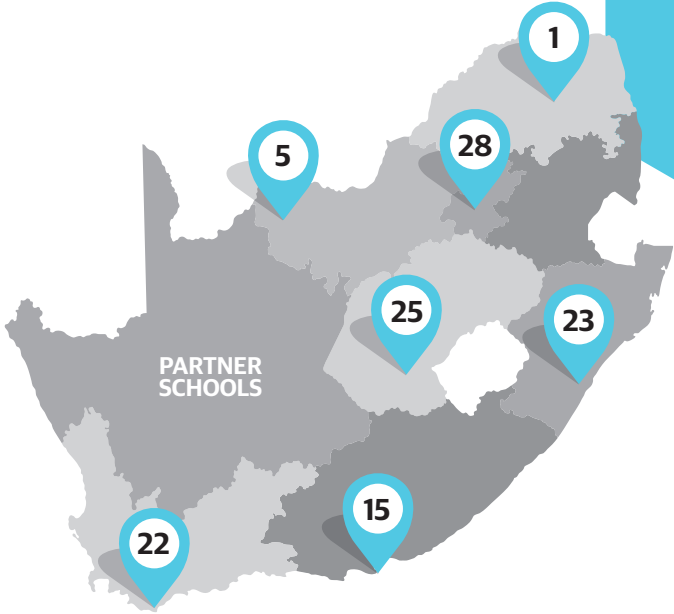
Over the past 15 years we have:

- Partnered with **316** high schools
- Graduated **12 935** participants including **10 394** learners and **2 541** principals and educators
- Trained **6 020** Representative Council of Learners
- Trained and engaged at least another **1 060** learners in other school-based values- based leadership programmes and involved many more in social action projects and youth led campaigns.
- We have an alumni youth network of more than **8 000** post matric youth across the country.



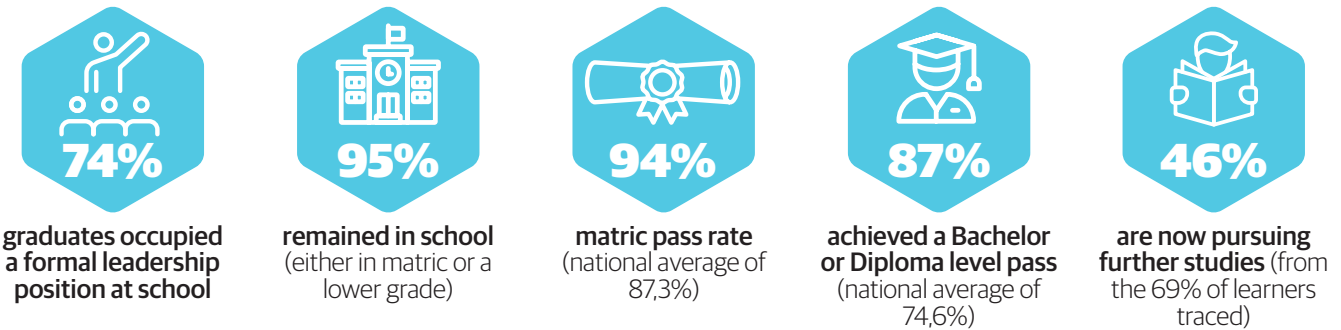
2024 At a Glance

- 119** partner schools across **7** provinces
- Facilitated **42** - 5-day residential values-based leadership academies
- Graduated **504** Learners and **126** Principals and Educators
- Trained **2280** learners who are part of the Representative Council of Learners in **60** schools through the 1 day programme and **39** RCL members through the 3 day residential programme for a cluster of 3 schools.
- Graduated **178** Educators from the 3 day Residential Educator Empowerment programme (Values Champion Empowerment).



- Provided ongoing thinking partner support to youth and adults working in teams to bring about change to **119** schools through their social action projects. This was done through a structured programme before and after the residential programmes.
- Launched the adapted Columba programme in **12** schools around the country. The adapted programme does not include the usual 5 day residential academy but seeks instead to lay a solid foundation in partner schools through a responsive approach to working more intensively with adults and more broadly with educators and in future, more broadly.
- We also started working across **6** schools through a place-based approach in Vryburg, Northwest.

Impact - Class of 2024



Personal Development Impact for 2024 Grade 12 Cohort

Baseline (Grade 9/10)	vs	Transition Survey (Grade 12)	
45%		97%	I am self-confident and express myself freely
96%		99%	I communicate clearly and respectfully
93%		97%	I get back up and persevere after tough times

(487 Academy graduates surveyed)

OUR APPROACH

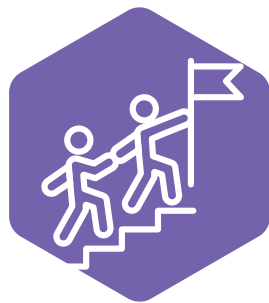
The Columba Way!

Columba Leadership is dedicated to transforming lives and communities by awakening the leader within. Our programme empowers people especially youth to realise their potential and become agents of positive transformation. Our Leadership program centres around four essential pillars: developing leadership skills, fostering social bonds in schools, and bridging the gap between learners and future opportunities and connecting communities.



Building

Develop values-based leaders who serve with confidence, resilience, initiative and an entrepreneurial mindset.



Bonding

Schools are supported to strengthen relationships within the school, while embedding values that promote youth engagement.



Bridging

Learner Alumni are bridged to income-generation or further study opportunities so they successfully transition post-school.



Connecting

School Communities and Programme Alumni are linked through collaborative platforms to remain connected, inspired, and engaged.

Building



a. Developing Values-Based Leadership

Columba develops values-based leaders who serve with confidence, resilience, initiative and an entrepreneurial mindset.

5-day values-based leaders hip academy to develop leadership and personal capabilities

Learners and adults are taken to a beautiful space to deeply explore values, leadership, and build strong, mutually respectful bonds. Through the experiential program, learners gain confidence, find their voice and develop a sense of agency, discovering their ability to impact the world positively. This newfound purpose inspires greater commitment to education and a clear focus on their futures and the role they can play in making a positive contribution.



42
Academies

With
730
Academy
Participants

Including
126
Educators and
Principals

And
504
Learners

Participant reflections from academies in 2024:

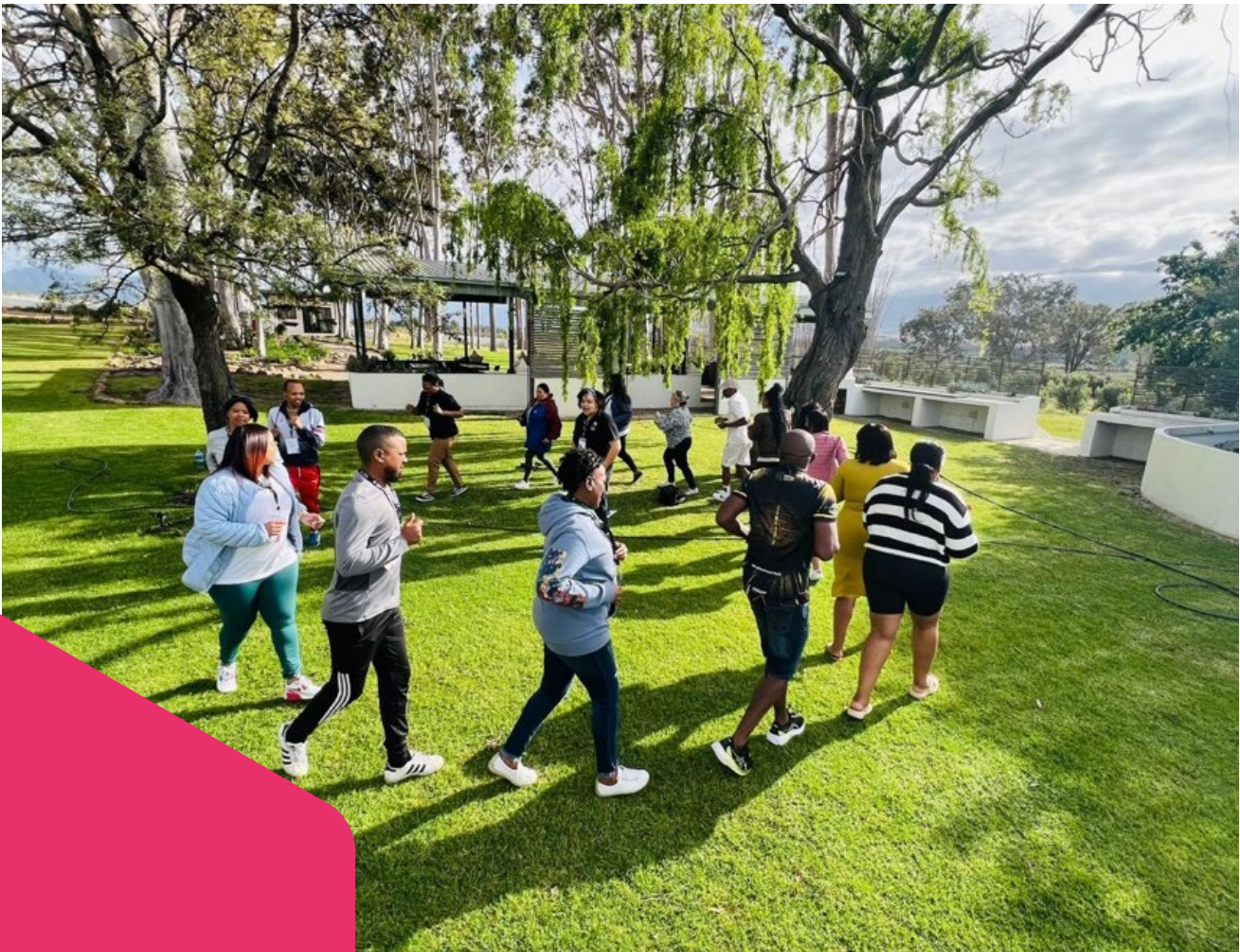
“I used to rely on myself, I have learnt to build teams that will share a vision and achieve as a unit.”
PRINCIPAL, LA WESI SECONDARY SCHOOL

“I now understand that leadership is not always about being in the spotlight but it's actually about leading others in a positive way.”
LEARNER, BAINSVLEI COMBINED SCHOOL

“A leader must be aware, a leader must focus, a leader must embrace their creativity and also help others to do the same and a leader must lead with integrity.”
LEARNER, WESTRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

“Creativity is not only about painting, drawing and creating, but it is also about critical thinking, collaboration and communication.”
LEARNER, ANCHOR COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL

”



b. From Burnout to Breakthrough – Reconnecting Educators to their “why”

3-day residential Educator Empowerment programme Columba Leadership's ongoing Educator Empowerment or what we call the Values Champion Empowerment responds to the pressures educators experience.

As part of a long-standing commitment to nurturing values-based leadership in schools, these sessions are not a response to crisis — they are a continuum of care, designed to strengthen educators in the face of it. It creates a vital space for educators to pause and reconnect with the values and passion that first drew them into the profession. As they become more personally resourced and inspired they are better able to offer support to youth. They also walk away from these sessions with new-found motivation for their work but also their own self-care and development.

Values Champion Empowerment Reflections:

“We are all great leaders that have inner children that need to be heard. We are all experiencing the same/similar situations in our schools. We are not alone. We need to voice and speak. We'll never be understood or known by our colleagues if we shy away and keep quiet. We need to open our mouths. We are valuable. We are SMART. We are fun and we are amazing.”
EDUCATOR LOUVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

“ There is still a lot that I need to do in order to improve my leadership and skills. Also the fact that am in 25 years experience of teaching does not mean I know everything, I learned a lot from them these young educators. Therefore combination of experience and techmology will take me far.”
PRINCIPAL VULUMZI SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

”



The most significant thing about this empowerment programme was....

“I am not doing enough for both myself and the youth. I need to do more. And for me to do that I first need to get out of my shell and I will... I will... I am going to face and overcome the challenges that hold me back, and I am going to elevate my purpose. I will seek more and better strategies to achieve that. And I need to bring out the better version of me.”

EDUCATOR LAMULA JUBILEE

“Being in a safe space, where you are free to speak out all difficulties that you encounter at schools and to listen to other educators. Most importantly sharing ideas and experiences to improve the lives of children, particularly disadvantaged children.

EDUCATOR, JOHNSON NQONQOZA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL.

”

8
Values
Champion
Empowerment
Residential
Programmes

178
Educators

c. Representative Council of Learners (RCL) Training

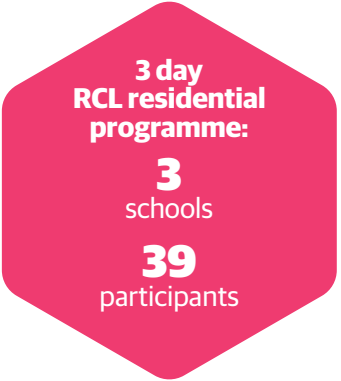
This mandated learner leadership body is equipped with targeted training to build leadership capacity, fulfil their representative role effectively, and actively address challenges within the school environment. We have 1 day programme facilitated at the school for RCL members and the Teacher Liaison Officer. We also have a 3 day residential programme offered across schools where funding permits this approach and which was enabled by Trevor Noah Foundation.



Delft Secondary 1 day RCL Training



3 day RCL training for Willow Crescent, Siyabonga and Equiniseni High Schools in Soweto



Some of the intentions sparked by the RCL Training:

“Take action, be brave and try to inspire others around me to be better.”
LEARNER, WESTRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

“As a leader I will ask for help and I will take opinions from other people.”
LEARNER, SIPHAMANDLA SECONDARY SCHOOL

“Speak up and not be shy. Learn to ask questions and solve problems.”
LEARNER, WILLOW CRESCENT SECONDARY SCHOOL

“Today’s training not only helped me to grow as a leader but to also grow as a person as some lessons will help me in my personal life and make me the best version of myself.”
LEARNER, KENILWORTH HIGH SCHOOL

”

Bonding



Schools are supported to strengthen relationships within the school, while embedding values that promote youth engagement.

In our ongoing commitment to instilling practical life skills and social responsibility, we support leaders from the various youth leadership structures in the school to identify the overarching vision they have to improve their school, understand who is tackling what issues, and collaborate in executing Social Action Projects. Collaborating in teams helps youth build valuable skills while making a positive difference in their environment, teaching them the power of their actions to create meaningful change. The activation of adults and youth serves to build an enabling school culture with values and youth engagement at the centre. Schools and groups decide on local priorities that need to be addressed – that they need to address



Willow Crescent Recycle Project (GP)



Peer late coming monitoring (EC)



Ravensmead Hospital Outreach (WC)



Masimbane Vegetable Garden (KZN)



Palmridge Antibullying Campaign (GP)

Bridging



Learner Alumni are bridged to income-generation or further study opportunities so they successfully transition post-school.

Through a carefully cultivated network of bridging partners, we connect alumni to meaningful opportunities that support their transition into further education or income-generating pathways.

Besides connecting youth to scholarship opportunities and sharing information about employment opportunities Columba Leadership was directly involved in the placement of youth in employment, apprenticeships or graduate programmes.

Partners:

- Moshal
- MAD Leadership
- Tsiba
- Mr Price (Catalyx)
- XEON
- Bidvest Services
- BluLever
- Youth@WORK

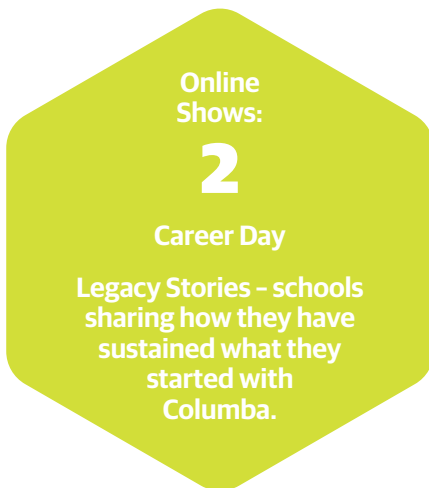
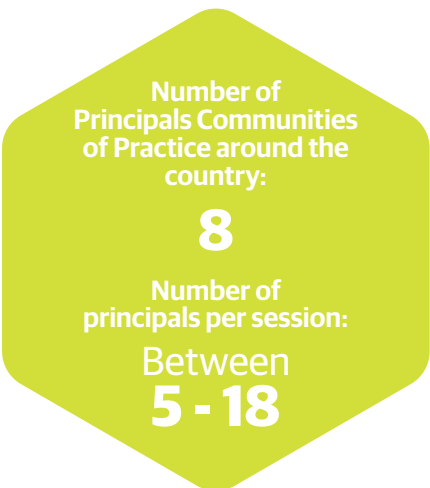


Connecting Communities



Schools are supported to strengthen relationships within the school, while embedding values that promote youth engagement.

We use in person and digital platforms and events to connect the network to opportunities post school. These include Principal Communities of Practice, online shows and whatsapp and online social media engagement of alumni.



OUR NEXT Expanded Frontiers

This year we started to operationalize our new strategy which aims to deepen impact, increase reach by repurposing content and exploring new deliveries.

Strategy aligned new deliveries tested in 2024- The Adapted Programme

Three-Day Principal Leadership Retreat

An immersive leadership experience offered to 12 school principals from across the country, designed to inspire, equip, and connect school leaders.

Cluster-Based School Development in Vryburg

Focused support across a cluster of six schools, with intensive engagement in one pilot school. This initiative begins with the three-day principal retreat and extends into a place-based, collaborative approach to school transformation.

Educator Teambuilding Workshops

School-wide sessions aimed at uniting teaching staff, reigniting their sense of purpose, and building stronger support systems to deepen youth engagement.

Why We Chose to Innovate

Innovation wasn't just an option—it became a necessity. A series of challenges and insights pushed us to reimagine how we work and who we serve:

- **Delays in funding** meant we could no longer deliver our full programme to 12 partner schools—an unsustainable compromise.
- A shifting **economic landscape** and growing urgency within the education sector made it clear: more had to be done to create real impact.
- **Principals reached out**, asking for deeper support and a safe space to reflect, share, and process their experiences—needs we could no longer ignore.
- Over time, we saw how **limited support for principals** and **divided educator teams** consistently weakened the outcomes of our efforts.
- We were also **tasked with supporting a school in a new region**, one facing deep challenges and requiring more intensive, on-the-ground engagement.

These factors became the catalyst for innovation—driving us to design solutions that are more responsive, relevant, and resilient.

What Made These Experimental Approaches Possible

Innovative Funders

Forward-thinking funders were open to exploring new ways of working. These included the Mineworkers Investment Corporation, Vula Amehlo, Waterloo Solar, and contributions from our sustainability reserve—supported by FEMEF and a high-net-worth individual.

A Bold Leadership Team

Our Executive team embraced experimentation, backed by an organisation that encourages innovation and supports new approaches.

Skilled Internal Capacity

We leveraged in-house expertise in programme development and facilitation, along with a trusted network of experienced freelancers.

An Engaged and Supportive Board

Our Board played a key role by providing the trust, encouragement, and oversight needed to try new things with confidence.

Principal Leadership Retreats

Two immersive 3-day leadership development retreats were held for school principals—bringing together leaders from 12 schools across 7 provinces, and 6 schools from Vryburg.

These high-impact retreats focused on three core pillars: Self, School, and Youth Engagement. Designed as a space for deep reflection, meaningful peer learning, and professional growth, the retreats offered principals the opportunity to pause, reset, and return renewed—ready to lead with clarity and purpose.



Principal Leadership Retreats

18 schools 18 principals

Principal Leadership Retreat Participant Reflections

“I came here as an individual and only concerned about my school and it’s progress. I was frustrated by a lot of things and demoralised by constant pressure put on me by the department. I have grown to operate as a collective having shared with my colleagues from other schools. Sharing has taught me that there are principals who carry more burdens than me and grew to see life at school in a different perspective. The fun in the retreat of how one is shown how to deal with colleagues has made me a better person. I can’t wait to go back and implement the changes.”

- NORTHWEST

“I have learnt a lot around delegation of work to avoid burnout. I have now learnt about instructional leadership and a “why”. I feel now I can have results in anything if my SMT and teachers have clear instructions put to them and not assumptions. I can deal with stressful situations now.”

- EASTERN CAPE

“Brave leadership demands me to be courageous, self-aware and not always wanting to be right.”

- WESTERN CAPE

“The retreat helped me realize that every opinion, every voice of the team matters and as their manager one has to bring them on board, assist them where they are lacking and hold them accountable.”

- NORTH WEST

“I have learnt that as individuals we do not see things the same way. As team members we need to discuss issues so that we all can focus on one goal at a time.”

- KWA-ZULU NATAL

“Seriously my learners have not been actively involved hence the misbehaviour and diverting to substances to gain comfort. Attention has mostly been given to learners who are bright and always forthcoming and leaving others behind. Going back I am going to ensure that no learner is left behind. I intend to start with disruptive ones and engage them in activities that they themselves initiate.”

- NORTH WEST



What We Witnessed and Became Aware Of

- The space created an opportunity for individuals to develop a deeper understanding of themselves beyond their formal roles.
- Participants gained an authentic grasp of leadership and values, and how these connect to their responsibilities.
- They left feeling empowered to motivate and support their School Management Teams more effectively.
- The opportunity to reflect on their schools allowed them to identify practical ways to improve and implement new tools.
- Peer-to-peer learning proved powerful, with best practices naturally shared across the group.
- The environment also encouraged reflection on key stakeholders who could help advance their schools.
- The space for vulnerability, learning, and even fun was deeply valued.
- We became aware of significant gaps in orientation and preparation for those stepping into the principal role.
- Firsthand accounts revealed the widespread divisions and fractures within educator groups and school management teams.

Educator Team-Building

We have learned over time that a divisive educator body impacts negatively on youth engagement and support. In order to address this fact and create a more conducive environment for learner engagement that is shared more broadly in the school we had a chance to develop a values-based educator team-building programme with the support of our partners Mineworkers Investment Corporation and Vula Amehlo.

This was tested at Zinniaville Secondary School in Rustenburg.

The day long programme focused on self-leadership, strengthening relationships, improving communication, and fostering collaboration between them.

Upon reflecting on the team building, one educator said, "I gained a better understanding of my colleagues, we all go through many different kinds of challenges. Columba helped us understand ourselves and each other better."



Our Observations:

- Opportunities to connect with purpose and passion deeply inspired the group.
- The program created a platform for participants to recognize the important role they can play in supporting youth engagement.
- Personal sharing fostered relationships during the day, laying the groundwork for stronger teamwork and collaboration.
- Participants began to envision a shared future for their school.
- The safe and supportive environment encouraged them to reflect on necessary changes—not only within the school but also in their personal spaces and lives.
- There is a clear need for emotionally safe spaces that promote vulnerability and genuine connection.

DIVERSIFYING WHAT WE DO TO ADD VALUE IN THE SECTOR

In 2024 we had the opportunity through partnerships to play a part in adding value to a systemic intervention and add value to another youth organisation's offering to their participants. Both of these involved Columba being contracted by the partner and therefore also aligned with our income-generation strategy for financial sustainability.

Capacitating the System

Columba joined a Collaboration in 2024 with SEED Educational Trust, LEAP schools, District Driven Data (DDD), and the University of Stellenbosch in a project for the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

This project aims to develop 36 Provincial/district officials into competent and effective facilitators who are intrinsically driven and able to facilitate leadership development programs. They will design 5 leadership programmes, namely:

1. Induction programme for newly appointed principals
2. Instructional leadership programmes for principals
3. Instructional leadership and management programmes for School Management Teams
4. Leadership and governance programmes for School Governing Bodies
5. Leadership development programme for learners

They will roll out a minimum of 48 leadership development programmes across the 12 districts in the Eastern Cape in 2025 and 2026.

The training and development of these officials happened in 5 study schools between September 24 and May 25, each lasting 3.5 days. Each partner was involved in the development and facilitation of the content for the study schools, bringing their expertise to shape and activate the participants to facilitate effectively. Columba was invited into the collaboration given our expertise in learner leader development.

NEXTUP AND COLUMBA LEADERSHIP

NEXTUP is an organisation that support high school students to successfully bridge the transition from high school into post-school training and work. They do this by building confidence, resilience, and the experience needed to:

- Find sustainable work and earn a stable income.
- Achieve and maintain wellness to live fulfilling, successful lives.

NEXTUP approached Columba to provide an incentive experience for some of their participants that had demonstrated consistent leadership.

8 Nextees were selected to attend a Columba Leadership weekend leadership experience as a prestigious prize. Columba facilitated a 3-day experiential Residential Academy structured around Columba's 6 core leadership values.



The group left the academy having developed themselves, strengthened relationships and with a plan of action which they actioned over the next 6 months.

The leadership experience was also attended by NEXTUP staff to be exposed to Columba's approach to facilitation and elicitation.



LEVERAGING OUR OTHER ASSETS FOR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Besides being the site of 19 of our values-based leadership academies in 2024 and the 2 Principal Leadership Retreats, we also hired out our Leadership Residency, located in the Cradle of Humankind at the Nirox Sculpture Park to Nirox and a partner in the sector as part of our income-generation strategy.



A LIVING LEGACY

People are at the heart of what we do. It is their activated potential that ensures that lives, schools and communities are enhanced.

Maintaining relationships over time with our alumni, adults and youth, mean that we can keep following their leadership journeys over time. The same holds true for partner schools.

Testimonies from the Columban Alumni Community

Ramatsekane Nkone

Second Year studying BSc (Engineering) in Mechatronics, Electrical and Electronics Engineering at UCT

Moshal Scholar

Age: 19

Graduated from the Columba academy in 2021

Matriculated from Popano High School, Free State in 2023

“Leadership is About Discovering Purpose.”



Life is complex, and so are its challenges. But I've learned that solutions often lie not in individual brilliance but in shared values that guide our actions. **For me, values have been a compass—defining a human-centred leadership rooted in Ubuntu and committed to uplifting the marginalised.**

Leadership in School

At my township school, values-based leadership meant aligning the collective aspirations of my peers with the core Columba Leadership principles: **Awareness, Creativity, and Service.** These values shaped every decision I made—not for personal gain, but for the greater good.

I entered high school as a quiet student focused on academics, hesitant to challenge authority. Columba changed that. It gave me the confidence to speak up, especially for those who felt unseen. I helped shift the culture of my school through:

- **Tutoring initiatives during COVID-19** to support students at risk of falling behind.
- **Co-founding the Resource and Intelligence Centre (RIC)**—a digital hub for Grades 10–12 study materials that boosted performance.

- **Introducing a teacher attendance register** as RCL President, in collaboration with the School Management Team—resulting in more consistent teaching and improved student outcomes.

These changes weren't always welcomed. Some teachers felt challenged, and I was called “too proud.” But Columba taught me that **leading with values requires resilience.** Upholding integrity and accountability may not make you popular, but it drives real transformation.

I learned that leadership isn't about titles—it's about purpose. Columba helped me see values as practical tools to shape choices and behaviours. The programme deepened my self-awareness, sharpened my decision-making, and strengthened my commitment to serve.

It also taught me discipline. Balancing academics, advocacy, and community work became possible because I had clarity of purpose. I worked hard not only for personal success but to empower others.

Leadership at University

At the University of Cape Town, I continued applying these principles. As part of the **Kilindini Residence House Committee**, we created systems to support academic success, build community, and leave lasting structures.

- We launched a **responsive tutoring system** and reimagined the mentorship programme through “Project Kilindini: Rethink the Badger Experience,” using workshops on teamwork and problem-solving.
- Through the **House Development Subcommittee**, we secured study resources, renovations, and practical upgrades like foldable tables and kitchen improvements.
- Every success—from budgeting to planning the Excellence Dinner—was the result of **collective effort** and a shared belief that our residence could be a space of growth and dignity.

What mattered most wasn't individual achievement, but collective ownership. Leadership became less about

finding my voice and more about creating platforms for others to be heard. It became about building systems that last—so future leaders don't start from scratch.

A Continuing Journey

Columba gave me the tools. UCT gave me the space to apply them. Looking ahead, the values of Awareness, Creativity, and Service will continue to guide me—not just in university, but in the **engineering work I hope to do for communities across Africa.**

If these values could transform a township school and a residence of 32 students, I believe they can shape classrooms, institutions, and, one day, entire societies.

Rose Malatji

Managing Director and Co-Founder Arcael Recruitment; Founder – Bold and Worthy Coaching.

Age: 28 Years

Matriculated from Realogile High School, Alexandra, Gauteng, 2015

Columba Leadership Graduate 2013.

“We went from saying ‘someone should do something’ to realising we were that someone.”



Leadership at School

At school, Values-based leadership, to me, was not just about standing in front; it was about standing for something. It meant leading from the heart, guided by values that grounded me when things around me felt uncertain. It looked like choosing kindness when it wasn't popular, standing firm on what was right, and inspiring others to believe in their own power to create change. At school, it was lived out through service, empathy, and action, not just words. **We learned that leadership wasn't about authority; it was about impact, character, and courage.**

Leadership into the Community

Our leadership spread into the community. **The social action project that truly changed everything for me**

was GOENDA — “Get High on Education, Not Drugs and Alcohol.” It started as a simple idea from a group of young people who were tired of seeing their friends lose hope, and it became a movement. We brought together five high schools in Alexandra to take a stand against substance abuse and to promote education and positive choices. Soon, we were being invited to speak on the radio, featured in newspapers, and even on a TEDx stage.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fX83A3WsF_Q

Youth Voice and Impact

But what mattered most wasn't the spotlight, it was knowing that our voices mattered and that we were showing our peers that they could lead too.

The change ushered in at school was so real that you could feel it in the hallways. Students started seeing themselves

differently. We went from saying, “someone should do something,” to realising we were that someone. GOENDA helped shift the energy from negativity to empowerment. People were excited to be part of something positive. It built pride in our schools, strengthened unity between different schools, and reminded many of us that our choices matter and that we could rewrite our stories. That kind of transformation stays with you forever.

Values Based Leadership and Me

This experience shaped me more than I could ever have imagined. Being part of Columba and leading GOENDA made me believe in myself in ways I hadn’t before. It taught me that leadership starts with who you are, not your position or background. I found my voice, my confidence, and my purpose. It’s where I first called myself a Peace Ambassador, not fully understanding then how deeply that title would stay with me. The experience gave me direction and a deep passion for serving others. It turned me from a dreamer into a doer, and that shift changed everything.

That experience is the foundation of who I am today. Everything I do, from storytelling to mentoring to life coaching, carries the same heart of purpose I discovered back then. It’s what inspired me to create spaces like Bold & Worthy Coaching, where I help people rebuild confidence, rediscover their worth, and rise from difficult experiences into purpose-driven living. It’s also the same fire that drives my work with Arcael Holdings, where we empower young people with skills, training, and opportunities to become employable and work-ready.

The lessons from that time still guide me that leadership doesn’t end at graduation, and that impact grows when you pour into others. Columba didn’t just shape my school journey; it awakened my life’s calling. **It taught me that true leadership is about building others and using your voice, your story, and your work to leave every space a little better than you found it.**

Three values from my Columba journey continue to guide me deeply, not just in my work, but in how I live and lead every day:

- **Integrity** — this value keeps me grounded and authentic. It reminds me to stay true to who I am and to lead with honesty, even when it’s hard. Integrity guides every decision I make, both in my personal life and through my work in Bold & Worthy Coaching and Arcael Holdings. It’s about aligning my actions with my purpose and staying faithful to my principles.
- **Perseverance** — this is the value that has carried me through every challenge. From my school days in Alexandra to building my career and businesses, perseverance has been my anchor. It taught me to keep showing up, to trust the process, and to keep pressing forward even when the journey gets tough.
- **Service** — this value is at the heart of everything I do. It’s about using my voice, my story, and my gifts to empower others. Whether I’m mentoring, coaching, or creating opportunities for young people, service reminds me that leadership is not about titles, it’s about impact. It’s about building others and leaving every person and place better than I found them.

These three values continue to light my path. They remind me that real leadership begins within, and that the greatest legacy we can build is the one we create in others.

Honestly, being a “Peace Ambassador” became more than a name I gave myself; it became a calling. I’ve come to understand that leadership doesn’t always look loud or grand. Sometimes, it’s simply choosing peace when chaos feels easier, choosing love when anger is justified, and choosing hope when everything feels uncertain.

My journey started with a little girl who wanted to be “President of the Universe” (A dream that still doesn’t exist in our realm). I’ve learned that real power lies in how you treat people and the difference you make right where you are.

Values-based leadership taught me that “legacy isn’t about what you leave behind, it’s what you build within others”. And that truth continues to guide how I live, lead, and love every single day.

Katlego Mokagane

Investment Consultant: Simeka Consultants and Actuaries

Age: 28

BSc Actuarial Science and Mathematical Statistics – University of Witwatersrand

Graduated from Columba Academy in 2012

Matriculated from Mandisa Shiceka High School, Kagiso, Gauteng in 2014

“I always say that my leadership journey was the genesis of the man I have become today.”



Values-based leadership is still is a benchmark against which I assess the quality of my leadership. Consider one of the values - service. My view on leadership has always been that I have an opportunity to serve my community with the talents that God has given me, it is my view now and it was also my view when I was in school.

Leadership at School

When I was in school, I would often offer up my time to help my school mates understand some concepts before exams and we would study together until nighttime. One would think that those hours took time away from my own learnings but in reality, it reinforced my understanding and most importantly as my teacher often reminded us “if you shine alone, you become a star but if you shine together, you become a universe”

During my schooling years we re-opened a library that had become obsolete, the rationale was that if we want our school to produce good results, then we have to make learning relatively easy and resources should be accessible, that project was merged with the academy funder Tsogo Sun donating books. That project naturally attracted talent from the school to join the home team (learners keen to be part of the movement but who had not attended the academy). One of the other projects we worked on was on tackling late coming because pupils would miss out of the first class which would usually be mathematics or other core subjects, the ripple effect of missing the classes would be poor performance. One of the ways we solved for this problem was asking some of the trouble-makers to be part of the solution. That had two effects

- They came earlier to school because they had found a sense of responsibility

- They started to reprimand their circle, as such there would be a curb in number of students who came late

The social action projects brought change to the peers. I think one of the challenges we faced was having sustainable change instead of two weeks of feeling good. **Looking back, if there's one thing I would change, it would be ensuring that we build systems that will be sustainable and will benefit pupils who joined the home team and those who come into the school way after we have left.**

How Leadership Has Shaped Me

One of the facilitators (either Dumi or Neo) made an analogy of how they intend the camp to be – a can of cold drink being shaken and upon being opened, it splashes all over the place. The engagement at the camp, alongside conversations I had with my elders really propelled me to try and push myself academically, to do better than the level I was at. The camp taught me to have high levels of awareness, even today, one of the compliments I get is how self-aware I am and my excellent attention to detail.

All the Columba values continue to guide me, in all aspects of my life. Interestingly, I cannot divorce the values from my Christianity journey. I apply the Columba values everyday in my life, at different intensities. A case in point is that I wrote my actuarial board exams in semester 1, I failed, but I had to persevere, seek counsel from people who have passed and be aware of my weak areas so that I can improve. And when I am tired of studying, I have to find creative ways to ensure that I retain information. **When I show up at work, I have an understanding that I am building a career and I am also serving my clients. I have no other choice but to be laser focused when I have an appreciation of these things.**

Brenda Phalane

Educator: Kopanong High School, Free State. Coordinator: Quality and Learning and Teaching Campaign, Teacher Liaison Officer for Representative Council of Learners, Feeding Scheme Committee Member, Assembly Committee Member, Matric Camp Committee Member.

Columba Values Champion

Graduated from Columba Leadership Academy in 2013 while at Moroko High School in Free State.

“Columba reminds us: our role as educators goes beyond the classroom. We shape lives, nurture leaders, and create lasting impact.”



My Path of Passion, Purpose and Transformation

Columba was a life-changing experience that reshaped how I see leadership and purpose. It instilled in me resilience, adaptability, and a deep commitment to empowering others. Before Columba, I felt confined—waiting for something to unlock my potential. It helped me discover inner strength, self-belief, and a newfound independence that continues to guide me today.

What Being a Values Champion Enabled

At Moroka High School, I served as a values champion, working closely with learners to support their growth. I held one-on-one sessions to understand their backgrounds and helped launch impactful projects, including:

1. Cleaning Campaign to instil pride and responsibility.
2. Hostel Revamp into a Maths, Science, Library, and Tech Lab—plus a school museum.
3. Community Outreach to a local old age home, sharing time, gifts, and joy.
4. Radio Engagements on Mosupatsela and Lesedi FM to promote values-based education.
5. Youth Conference for schools in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, and Bloemfontein, tackling issues like gangsterism, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy through shared solutions.

These projects were led by learners and fostered leadership, unity, and service.

At my current school, Kopanong Secondary, I've brought the Columba program with me. Though the school is larger (approx. 1800 learners) and the new values champion teachers still need training, the drive remains strong. Most learners face poverty, making our work even more crucial. I stay committed, passionate, and purposeful—focused on uplifting both learners and educators.

Colleague Perceptions

I am gratified that my colleagues and principal affirm my journey and role:

Principal at Kopanong:

- Exceptional educator who goes above and beyond.
- Passionate, engaging, and dedicated to learner success.
- A true role model and effective communicator.

Colleagues:

- Inspiring and committed to learners' holistic development.
- Builds a culture of positivity, high standards, and teamwork.
- Advocates for inclusive leadership and amplifies learner voices.
- A straight-talker who values integrity and fairness.

School Story

Sustainability at Sunward Park, Gauteng

In our 2018 annual report, we highlighted the progress made at Sunward Park, a partnership launched in 2015. By that year, the school had taken significant steps to embed values and youth engagement into its culture. These values were actively promoted across all levels—during assemblies, in classrooms, and among staff. Columba learners also began leading the Grade 8 orientation camp, using values to inform a positive youth culture.

Through collaboration between youth and adults, the school achieved notable results, including a marked reduction in substance abuse and truancy.

Despite receiving no direct support from Columba over the past three years, Sunward Park has sustained its culture of youth engagement. The Grade 8 orientation program, grounded in Columba values, remains a standard practice led by students. Activities and games are used to make these values accessible, encouraging peer support and mentorship between older and younger learners. The formal Columba Leadership Structure also continues to thrive at the school.

Please see insert legacy story link which includes the Sunward Park as well as a few other school stories.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3A-7-a7aUk>



FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

Financial Overview

SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS AT 28 FEBRUARY 2025

The annual financial statements, which are summarised below, have been audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. since 2020

	2025	2024
	R	R
	000	000
INCOME STATEMENT		
INCOME		
Donations received	22 658	29 909
Other Income	1 452	-
Profit on sale of asset	-	3
Dividends received	1 230	1 383
Interest received	2 053	2 418
Unrealised profit on investments	6 569	5 026
	33 962	38 739
EXPENDITURE		
Academy expenses	3 969	6 416
Programme expenses	20 556	23 647
Trust management expenses	7 274	5 532
Loss on sale of asset	3	-
Depreciation	654	691
Losses realised on investments	6	880
	32 462	37 166
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	1500	1573

	2025	2024
	R	R
	000	000
BALANCE SHEET		
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Investments	82 358	81 013
Property, plant and equipment	12 960	13 488
	95 318	94 501
Current assets		
Inventory	404	551
Trade and other receivables	557	395
Value added tax	274	1 526
Cash and cash equivalents	3 597	4 706
	4 832	7 178
TOTAL ASSETS	100 150	101 679
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Trust capital	1	1
Sustainability reserve	47 766	47 766
Accumulated surplus	16 988	15 488
	64 755	63 255
Non-current liability		
Deferred income	30 000	30 000
	30 000	30 000
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	738	852
Deferred income	4 579	7 450
Bank overdraft - Credit Card	78	122
	5 395	8 424
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	100 150	101 679

Our Partners In Impact



PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE WITH EMPLOYEES OF ALLAN GRAY

"Columba's commitment to fostering resilience in young people, grounded in principled values, equips its programme participants to thrive in the workplace and actively contribute to their communities. Few organisations in the youth empowerment sector develop young individuals as effectively as Columba. Partnering with an organisation of Columba's calibre has been both enriching and insightful, affording us a deeper understanding to key drivers of youth empowerment."



BLUE SPEC HOLDINGS

"Blue Spec Holdings acknowledges and highly values our partnership with the Columba Leadership Fund Team, who introduced us to the MH Baloyi High School. Our continued contributions, both to Columba and MH Baloyi School, have resulted in a meaningful and sustainable impact on the lives of many, and the wider community."



BIDVEST BANK

"Bidvest Bank partners with Columba Leadership as part of its commitment to socio-economic development (SED) and transformation. This partnership aligns with the Bank's strategic priorities to foster sustainable community development and youth empowerment, key pillars of its corporate social responsibility and transformation objectives. By supporting Columba Leadership, Bidvest Bank contributes to nurturing young leaders who are equipped with vital skills, ethical values, and resilience, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the broader economy."

"This collaboration also enhances the Bank's mission to drive inclusive growth by addressing socio-economic disparities and creating opportunities for disadvantaged groups. It reflects Bidvest Bank's dedication to transformative practices that go beyond compliance, focusing on impactful initiatives that build capacity and promote long-term societal progress. Through partnerships like these, Bidvest Bank reinforces its role not just as a financial institution, but as a catalyst for social change and empowerment."



BIDVEST SERVICES

"We have supported Columba Leadership and their initiatives to improve and nurture the quality of leaders in our country. The Columba program is well-structured and organised and the content is such that the scholars can relate to it. Corporates such as ourselves have a critical role in supporting our youth to ensure that we have a sustainable pipeline of exceptional future Leaders."

"The Columba Leadership Programme is values-based, an opportunity, to learn, grow and look at one's life freshly in the context of values and possibilities."

"One of the major reasons we have partnered with Columba is because our country is in need of young leaders with expertise and individuals who strive for excellence in order to lead us through the current political and economic challenges and to pioneer us through the Fourth Industrial Revolution."



CONCENTRIX

"Our partnership with Columba Leadership spans over 10 years and that's because the work they do really matters! The values based leadership skills they teach makes a tangible difference to not only the schools themselves but the educators and more importantly the learners. They truly change lives and equip young people to harness their potential and be the change they want to be. The authenticity, integrity and value in change for good of our youth and their future is what makes us super proud and honoured to continue working with Columba Leadership".



DELTA VICTOR BRAVO

"Columba Leadership continues to inspire us with its tireless commitment to creating impact through young leaders. We are grateful for our partnership with Columba Leadership, as with each engagement we too learn more about ourselves and are encouraged to do more."





FEMEF

"FEMEF is honoured to have partnered with Columba over what is close to a decade. The work of Columba Leadership has made, and continues to make, an important contribution to the FEMEF strategy of making a meaningful contribution to shifting the public education system. Their work focuses on cultivating accountability in young people, and their values-based leadership program has an important role to play in creating school cultures that nurture healthy learning in public high schools in South Africa."



HCI

"We partner with Columba Leadership because we have seen firsthand the transformative impact of their work in awakening leadership, accountability, and personal responsibility among high school learners. Their programme creates a sense of urgency within the school community, motivating both learners and school leadership to take ownership of the school's performance and culture."

"Columba Leadership helps learners understand that, for both the school and themselves to thrive, they must actively contribute to building a positive school image and fostering a supportive learning culture. The approach, grounded in Columba's core values, empowers students to play an integral role in shaping a vibrant and successful school culture and equips them to become leaders and change agents in their communities. We like their model and approach!"



MCS FOUNDATION (UK)

"We are inspired and excited by the work that Columba Leadership is doing in schools to support young people to be learners and leaders of the future. We particularly like that Columba's ethos is to encourage those young people to support their peers and other young people which builds stronger communities and healthy relationships."



MIC – VULA AMEHLO

"In 2023 and 2024, the Mineworkers Investment Company partnered with the Columba Leadership Academy to introduce a much-needed leadership development component to our Schools Programme. Since its inception in 2016, the programme has focused on lower-quintile schools with the potential to excel given the right support and encouragement. While it provided essential academic support, the programme's core emphasis was on qualitative initiatives that offered learners alternative developmental opportunities beyond academics. These included performing arts, public speaking, and entrepreneurship. Recognising the remarkable impact of the Columba Leadership Academy's approach—particularly its emphasis on nurturing ambassadors for sustainable leadership within schools—it was a natural progression to collaborate. The academy's work not only transformed learners but also inspired educators, embedding a culture of leadership and accountability within participating schools. Despite a limited timeframe due to a shift in our CSI strategy in 2024, the programme yielded significant results in our Rustenburg partner school, Zinniaville. It successfully fostered a sustainable leadership culture among the learners and educators involved, underscoring its transformative potential. The Columba Leadership Academy stands out for its ability to drive positive change, particularly in schools operating under challenging circumstances and with limited resources. It is truly one of the best-kept secrets in the education social investment space, delivering meaningful and lasting impact."



OLD MUTUAL

"We partner with like-minded organisations like Columba Leadership because we believe education is a national priority that requires socially responsible corporate citizens to pool resources and expertise to address systemic challenges, our partnership with Columba Leadership enables us to scale impact by reaching more schools, learners, and educators. We do this by bringing our diverse strengths and experiences to the table, enhancing the quality and innovation of education interventions."





OPPENHEIMER GENERATIONS RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

"The partnership with Columba Leadership has been an incredible journey, this brilliant initiative is exactly what Africa needs. To create an opportunity to develop and inspire young people, turning them into thoughtful and good leaders, while changing their lives and their communities from within. Columba are developing an important opportunity for meaningful change in South Africa through this development of this network of young leaders through a targeted intervention in schools to improve youth engagement and provide opportunities within schools for these future learners. Oppenheimer Generations Research and Conservation and the Oppenheimer family are proud and honoured to be a part of this amazing initiative and remains committed to improving the lives of youth in South Africa."



THE CARL & EMILY FUCHS FOUNDATION

"It is indeed a privilege for us at The Carl & Emily Fuchs Foundation to be partnering with Columba Leadership in contributing to the development of young leaders who are capacitated to facilitate values-based, meaningful change that positively impact our shared future. The need for investment into and far-reaching impact of equipping and empowering future-fit youth leaders and change-makers cannot be overstated. Well done to the Columba team!"



THE GOLDIN FOUNDATION

"The Goldin Foundation for Excellence in Education congratulates Columba Leadership for its recognition as an Exemplary Awards Project recipient. Your creative and innovative program continues to make valuable contributions and has a positive impact on students becoming future leaders, classroom teachers, families, and the broader community. Your encouragement and promotion of civic awareness and engagement is applauded. There is great potential for other school districts and community partners to adapt and/or replicate your project."



TIBER CONSTRUCTION

"Tiber Construction partners with Columba Leadership to support young people transitioning from school to the workplace, fostering shared values such as integrity, ethical leadership and perseverance."



TUTUWA

"Tutuwa was founded on the premise of harnessing the potential of South Africa's youth. Columba Leadership is one of our strategic partners entrusted to help achieve this mandate. A credible organisation, passionate about unleashing the fullest potential of black schooling going children to become positive change makers in their communities and later prominent leaders in their careers."



UMOYA

"Umoja Energy partnered with Columba to address the immediate needs of our school communities, through a responsive approach by igniting this leadership journey of change, which is essential for a more sustainable and equitable future by leveraging strategic partnerships to optimize impact."



WATERLOO SOLAR

"Waterloo Solar is honoured to be in partnership with Columba. Why Columba...Team of visionaries who are actively making impactful change in diverse communities. Waterloo Solar and Columba, share the same value and share the same actions of being positive catalyst to heart centred, impactful change within our communities. It makes sense to work together."

Other Supporters

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Our trustees bring a diverse range of skills and experience to Columba. They are:

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Jennisha Gappoo
Sarah Rennie
Zandile Hlophe
Bongi Matiwaza
Tinyiko Bvuma
Tracy Hackland
Sheila Surgey
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Our Team

*As at 28 February 2025.



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