

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT



REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ON ITS OVERSIGHT VISIT TO CRESTWAY HIGH SCHOOL IN RETREAT

05 AUGUST 2025

REPORT

The 2024/25 Strategic Objectives of the WCPP, linked to the Speakers' Priorities, which impact committees, are as follows:

Priority 1: Building a credible WCPP; and

Priority 3: Strengthening the core business.

The Standing Committee on Education (hereafter the Committee), having conducted an oversight visit to the Crestway High School on 05 August 2025, reports as follows:

The delegation

The delegation of the Standing Committee on Education included the following Members:

Van Wyk, LD (DA) (Chairperson of the Committee until at the time of the oversight visit)

Booyesen, M (DA)

Christians, CF (ACDP)

Sayed, MK (ANC)

Apologies

Kaizer-Philander, WF (DA)

Stephens, DR (PA)

Walters, TCR (DA)

The following parliamentary official accompanied the committee:

Ms. W Hassen-Moosa, Procedural Officer

1. Overview

The Standing Committee on Education's visit to the Crestway High School highlighted the school's significant transformation from being the worst-performing institution in the Western Cape to one demonstrating notable academic and cultural progress. Key developments included visionary leadership, strategic academic planning, and the implementation of a digital classroom with AI-assisted learning tools. The school now offers a wide range of enrichment programmes, maintains strong partnerships with universities and NGOs, and has improved its matric pass rate from 35% to 66%. Professor Jonathan Jansen played a pivotal role in this turnaround, providing daily mentorship and discipline-focused interventions.

2. Visit to the Crestway High School

Ms C Jacobs, the Principal, Ms C Meyer-Williams, Director: Metro South Education District and Prof Jansen from Stellenbosch University were among the officials present during the visit.

2.1. Key aspects discussed at the school

Ms Jacobs provided an overview of the school. The presentation for Crestway High School outlined several key areas of the school.

2.2. Key Points for the Oversight Report: Crestway High School

- 2.2.1. Crestway High School, through its vision and mission, is committed to holistic education that empowers learners to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. The school promotes inclusive education in a safe environment, underpinned by values of respect, collaboration, and skill development.
- 2.2.2. The principal is recognised as an outstanding visionary leader, having collaboratively developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) with key stakeholders. A strategic academic focus is evident, particularly in Grades 8, 9, and 12, with emphasis on mathematics and systemic test outcomes.
- 2.2.3. A shift towards distributed leadership is underway to reduce over-reliance on the Principal and strengthen leadership capacity across the school.
- 2.2.4. A state-of-the-art digital classroom is being set up in partnership with Stellenbosch University, private sector entities, NGOs, and the WCED. This facility will feature AI-powered learning tools, including the AMIRA reading assistant, to address literacy challenges in the GET phase.
- 2.2.5. The school offers a wide range of academic support and enrichment programmes, including remedial reading, mentorship by alumni, career exhibitions, and post-exam activities.
- 2.2.6. Cultural and sporting activities are robust, with programmes such as choir, eco-club, netball, cricket, athletics, and chess contributing to holistic learner development.
- 2.2.7. The school is staffed by a combination of permanent, acting, contract, and SGB-appointed educators. Leadership positions are filled, though some are in acting capacities. Non-teaching staff includes administrative and support personnel.
- 2.2.8. The overall learner-teacher ratio stands at approximately 31.9:1, with variations across grades and language streams. This ratio reflects the need for additional teaching staff to support academic interventions.
- 2.2.9. The school provides daily meals to 250 learners, exceeding its official allocation through staff donations and partnerships with local organisations. Additional support includes weekly soup servings and bread donations.
- 2.2.10. Comprehensive safety measures are in place, including access control, emergency procedures, and compliance certifications. The school collaborates with various stakeholders, including SAPS, CPF, and local government, to ensure a safe learning environment.
- 2.2.11. The Grade 12 pass rate improved significantly from 35% to 66%, with increased distinctions and B-symbol passes. This reflects a positive shift in academic culture and learner outcomes.
- 2.2.12. The school has cultivated strong partnerships with universities, NGOs, and professional bodies, enhancing access to resources and expertise. Notable collaborators include Professor Jonathan Jansen, UWC, UCT, CTLI, AIMS, and the Citizen Leadership Lab.
- 2.2.13. The school is actively involved in conservation science through its Eco-Club. In collaboration with CPUT and other research institutions, the school is conducting a bird ringing and tracking study that contributes to environmental education.
- 2.2.14. Challenges identified by the school are; the persistent underperformance in lower grades, community instability affecting learner well-being, limited resources and staffing, low parental involvement, and non-payment of school fees, which remain significant challenges. Strategic interventions are in place to address these issues

Special Intervention: Professor Jonathan Jansen's Turnaround Strategy

- 2.2.15 At the beginning of 2024, Crestway High School was identified as the worst-performing school in the Western Cape, grappling with severe discipline issues, gang-related disruptions, and a matric pass rate of only 35%. The school's transformation was significantly catalysed by the voluntary intervention of Professor Jonathan Jansen from Stellenbosch University, whose personal connection to the school and professional expertise in education reform played a pivotal role in its renewal.

2.2.16. Professor Jansen's involvement was driven by a sense of personal responsibility, having grown up adjacent to the school grounds. Motivated by a tabloid headline highlighting the school's poor performance, he offered his services to the Western Cape Education Department as a turnaround specialist, free of charge. With the support of Stellenbosch University, he committed to daily engagements with Crestway High School, working closely with Principal Cheryl Jacobs and her team to restore discipline and academic focus.

2.2.17. Key interventions included:

- **Restoration of order and discipline**, beginning with punctual gate closures and consistent learner monitoring.
- **Support for educators** through classroom management strategies and morale-boosting engagement.
- **Resource mobilisation**, facilitated through university and donor partnerships, which provided modern teaching tools and essential materials.
- **Constructive accountability**, implemented via post-exam reviews and solution-oriented feedback mechanisms.

2.2.17. The success of Crestway's turnaround has since inspired a broader initiative—Professors Back to School (PBS)—which aims to embed experienced education academics in underperforming schools to better prepare future teachers and support school improvement efforts.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, Crestway High School, which was formerly the lowest-performing school, has improved significantly in terms of academic performance, school culture, and learner support; its matric pass rate has increased from 35% to 66%. Professor Jonathan Jansen's voluntary participation was crucial to this turnaround; his discipline-focused tactics, daily mentoring, and resource mobilisation initiatives helped bring order back and gave staff and students a fresh sense of direction. Crestway High School, which is backed by capable leadership, dedicated teachers, and cooperative partnerships, is a shining example of what happens when responsibility, compassion, and creativity come together. Even though there are still issues, the school's advancements demonstrate its dedication to fostering futures, regaining dignity, and providing each student with a top-notch education.

3. Acknowledgments

The Committee thanked the WCED, the Principal, and the teachers who were present during the visit to the Crestway High School.



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MR P JOHNSON, MPP
CHAIRPERSON OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT