



**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM GMT THURSDAY JUNE 15**

## Two inspirational South African schools named in Top 10 shortlists for \$250,000 World's Best School Prizes 2023

- **SPARK Soweto named in Top 10 shortlist for World's Best School Prize for Community Collaboration**
- **Rustenburg Girls' High School named in Top 10 shortlist for World's Best School Prize for Supporting Healthy Lives**

Two inspirational South African schools have been named in the Top 10 shortlists for the [\\$250,000 World's Best School Prizes](#). The five World's Best School Prizes, founded last year by T4 Education in collaboration with Accenture, American Express, Yayasan Hasanah, and the Lemann Foundation, are the world's most prestigious education prizes.

SPARK Soweto, an independent, partially government-funded kindergarten and primary school in Johannesburg, South Africa, which has become a catalyst for change for its disadvantaged community that was once symbolic of the struggle against Apartheid, has been named in the Top 10 shortlist for the World's Best School Prize for Community Collaboration.

Rustenburg Girls' High School, a government school in Rondebosch, Cape Town, South Africa, which embraces the vital role that physical and mental fitness play in a well-rounded education, has been named in the Top 10 shortlist for the World's Best School Prize for Supporting Healthy Lives.

The five World's Best School Prizes - for Community Collaboration, Environmental Action, Innovation, Overcoming Adversity, and Supporting Healthy Lives - celebrate schools everywhere for the pivotal role they play in developing the next generation of learners and for their enormous contribution to society's progress, especially in the wake of COVID. The Prizes were established to share the best practices of schools that are transforming the lives of their students and making a real difference to their communities.

**Vikas Pota, Founder of T4 Education and the World's Best School Prizes, said:**

*"The schools shortlisted for the World's Best School Prizes, no matter where they can be found or what they teach, all have one thing in common. They all have a strong school culture. Their leaders know how to attract and motivate exceptional educators, inspire change, and build excellent teaching and learning environments.*

*"I must congratulate SPARK Soweto and Rustenburg Girls' High School on being named in the Top 10 shortlists for the World's Best School Prizes 2023. Schools across the globe will learn*

*from the story of these trailblazing South African institutions and the culture they have cultivated.”*

### **About the schools:**

**SPARK Soweto** is an independent, partially government-funded kindergarten and primary school in Johannesburg, South Africa. By prioritising affordability, community engagement, and environmental stewardship, this school has become a catalyst for change for its disadvantaged community, which was once symbolic of the struggle against Apartheid. With initiatives that tackle social and economic challenges head-on, such as curbing local unemployment and addressing gender-based violence, the impact this school has made in such a short time is the result of listening and responding to the community.

SPARK Soweto's model is rooted in the five core values of Service, Persistence, Achievement, Responsibility, and Kindness (SPARK), and the school's community is further enshrined in the 6th core value of Ubuntu – ‘I am, because we are.’ As such, the school prioritised community engagement from its very inception which involved interacting with and surveying the community to understand their educational and social needs.

Based on that understanding, the school launched a number of community initiatives to help address the challenges of its surrounding area, such as its Environmental Stewardship programme, which involved cleaning the surrounding areas and erecting permanent concrete bins to curb waste pollution. This helped instil environmental responsibility and stewardship in the community.

The school also addressed local unemployment by prioritising the hiring of local youth who have just completed their undergraduate studies. The school engaged with the local municipal counsellor and formed an agreement that at least 30% of the people hired at SPARK Soweto must reside within the Soweto community. As a result, over 60% of the staff that work at SPARK Soweto were residents of Soweto, which further solidified the school's investment in making the community better.

Other initiatives include a Christmas drive each year to balance the socio-economic struggles during the festive season, and counselling to educate and raise awareness about Gender-Based Violence in South Africa.

In an important example, that the community has adopted the school as a result of its efforts, community members took it upon themselves to check on the school and its buildings for any signs of damage, day and night, during recent riots. Significantly, while several buildings in the area were attacked, the school itself was left untouched.

**Rustenburg Girls’ High School**, a government school in Rondebosch, Cape Town, South Africa, embraces the vital role that physical and mental fitness play in a well-rounded education and has taken proactive steps to ensure its students' holistic growth and success. The school has introduced a Sports Policy to ensure that learners are provided with opportunities to participate in various sports engagements, thanks to which the school aims to promote healthy living and enhance the overall wellbeing of its students and wider community.

Rustenburg Girls' High School is an unapologetically academically-driven school, but wanted to balance this focus by leveraging South Africa's appetite for sports and being outdoors. The school recognised early on that sports teach valuable life skills, such as teamwork, goal-setting, and time-management, and while these complement academic and cultural programmes, the sports' themselves provide learners with the additional benefits of physical activity, such as stress relief, improved mood, and better overall wellbeing.

For this reason, the school implemented a Sports Policy that has made sports compulsory for Grade 8 and 9 learners. The policy allows learners to choose from a wide range of sports, including both competitive and social options. The athletic instruction itself provides one structured and one unstructured sports lesson every 10 days, meaning students have both organised and creative opportunities within the programme.

In addition to contributing to its ongoing line of top-level, nationally- and internationally-recognised athletes, the impact of the school's approach can be seen in the quality friendships, sense of belonging, and overall sense of well-being experienced by the learners.

### **Next steps:**

The Top 3 finalists for each of the five World's Best School Prizes will be announced in September 2023 followed by the winners in October. The winner of each Prize will be chosen based on rigorous [criteria](#) by a Judging Academy comprising distinguished leaders across the globe including academics, educators, NGOs, social entrepreneurs, government, civil society, and the private sector.

A prize of US\$250,000 will be equally shared among the winners of the five Prizes, with each receiving an award of US\$50,000.

All 50 shortlisted schools will be invited to share their best practices through events on the [T4 Communities](#) app or School Transformation Toolkits that showcase their "secret sauce" to innovative approaches and step-by-step instructions on how others can replicate their methods to help improve education everywhere.

The School Transformation Toolkits from last year's winning and shortlisted schools are now [available online](#).

### **ABOUT T4 EDUCATION:**

We believe every child everywhere deserves a good education. We are building the world's largest community of teachers and schools to achieve this. Together. Our digital media platform provides opportunities for educators to network, collaborate, share good practices, and support each other's efforts to improve learning and school culture. We work to amplify teachers' voices because the world we want to see will only be built by listening to those at the heart of education.

Our global community of over 200,000 teachers and our digital media platform provides an engine for organisations to run education prizes that cut through in both the international media and the public consciousness.

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