

Community Empowerment Through Education

Partnership with the Alexandra Education Committee (AEC)

Balondolozzi demonstrates a long-standing commitment to strengthening educational opportunities for young people in underserved communities. A core element of this commitment is its partnership with the Alexandra Education Committee (AEC), an organisation established in 1996 to provide full high-school bursaries to academically talented learners from low-income households in Alexandra. Through this programme, more than 180 learners access quality education at well-resourced partner schools - including Highlands North Boys High School, Liberty Community Schools, Sacred Heart College, Sandringham High School, Sekolo Sa Borokgo (SSB), SAHETI, St David's Marist Inanda, St Mary's Waverley, Waverley Girls' High School and Waterford Kamhlaba Swaziland. The AEC aims to steadily expand this number in the coming years to support even more deserving students.

Balondolozzi, together with other AEC members provide financial support for the learners, covering the cost of their AEC bursaries throughout high school. This sponsorship ensures that every learner selected has their school fees paid, receives transportation where needed, uniforms and stationery, meals, extra academic support, access to a computer centre and library, and additional tutoring during weekends and school holidays.

This long-term sponsorship removes the financial barriers that stand between a child and their access to quality education.

AEC Programme Structure: A Holistic Model for Learner Success

The AEC's primary programme offers a five-tiered support structure, including **financial, academic, vocational, pastoral** and **alumni networking** - designed to ensure that each learner receives consistent and meaningful assistance. Through the financial support component, learners benefit from full bursaries that cover school fees, transport where needed, school uniforms, stationery, daily meals, extra lessons and holiday classes, as well as access to a well-

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resourced library and computer facilities. The AEC also assists with essential medical needs, including eye tests, prescription glasses and other health-related requirements.

Academic development is strengthened through structured Saturday School sessions for Grades 8 to 12, where learners receive additional lessons in Mathematics, Physical Science, English and Afrikaans. Accounting and coding are also offered as elective subjects, broadening learners' exposure to skills aligned with future academic and professional opportunities.

To ensure that learners' transition successfully into careers and tertiary studies, the AEC provides dedicated vocational support beginning in Grade 11. Each learner completes aptitude and vocational assessments and receives personalised feedback to guide their career decision-making. Matric learners attend a Careers Day and receive hands-on assistance with university applications, bursary submissions and, where required, financial support for registration fees. The AEC also facilitates access to donated laptops to enable a smooth transition into tertiary study environments.

Pastoral and emotional support form an equally important part of the AEC's model. A dedicated community worker visits the homes of applicants prior to their final selection to assess family circumstances and ensures support in the best possible way.

The AEC's alumni network forms the final pillar of this holistic model. Alumni remain closely involved with the organisation, returning regularly for continued support or to contribute to the next generation of learners. Many alumni have established successful careers in respected professions, and two now serve on the AEC's Finance Committee. Their continued involvement reflects the enduring relationships and long-term impact fostered through the programme.

Balondolozzi's Contribution Since 2019

Balondolozzi's involvement with the AEC began in 2019 with the adoption and sponsorship of eleven learners for a full five-year high-school period. Beyond financial support, the firm places significant emphasis on personal development through mentorship. Balondolozzi analysts, many



of whom once entered the firm through its graduate programme, provide ongoing guidance, encouragement, and exposure to career possibilities in the financial sector and beyond.

Over the years, strong relationships have formed between mentors and mentees. Learners have demonstrated exceptional ambition, expressing interest in fields such as medicine, neuroscience, law, astronomy, graphic design, and environmental science. Despite challenging socio-economic circumstances, many of the students excel academically and actively participate in extracurricular activities including robotics, coding, chess, sport, and creative arts.

Strengthening the Partnership: Adoption of 10 New Learners

In 2025, Balondolozzi expanded its commitment by adopting ten Grade 8 learners through the AEC. This new cohort is supported by a dedicated team of analysts and portfolio managers who will mentor them throughout their high-school journey, and where possible, into tertiary studies and early career development.

A key highlight of the year was Balondolozzi's attendance at the learners' academic prize-giving ceremony in October 2025, in recognition of the learners' exceptional performance and dedication. To honour their achievements, Balondolozzi prepared personalised gift bags for each learner. These included an inspiring memoir written by the founder of a renowned global shoe brand - selected as a lifelong keepsake to encourage resilience, ambition and purposeful decision-making as the learners navigate their own journeys.

The ceremony took place shortly before the examination period, which created an ideal opportunity to extend additional support. Each gift bag contained study notebooks, study snacks and handwritten messages from each learner's mentor. These personalised notes offered encouragement, practical advice and reflections on the importance of perseverance, discipline and pushing forward despite obstacles, ensuring that every learner felt supported and motivated going into the exam season.



Enhancing Literacy and Lifelong Learning

To strengthen foundational learning skills, Balondolozzi has introduced a literacy support initiative for the newly adopted cohort. The firm has committed to supporting the acquiring of reading materials to nurture a love of learning and build confidence in comprehension and critical thinking. In the coming year, Balondolozzi aims to launch a reading circle or book club for the girls, creating a supportive environment where mentorship and literacy development intersect.

A Long-Term Commitment to Youth Development

Balondolozzi's involvement with the AEC represents a long-term, purpose-driven investment in South Africa's youth. The firm remains committed to deepening its engagement, strengthening its mentorship programmes and supporting learners through every stage of their development.

Through this partnership, Balondolozzi aims to contribute to a more equitable and opportunity-rich society, one in which young people are empowered to realise their potential and build meaningful futures.