

# LAPALALA WILDERNESS SCHOOL: INSPIRING SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH

Author: info@klassikdigital.co.za



The Lapalala Wilderness School (LWS) supports 39 schools, 370 educators and approximately 10,874 learners through the Sustainable Schools Programme which is part of the school's Outreach project.

With an aim to instill a passion for nature in the hearts of the country's youth, the vision of this school is to help children to discover the true value of the biodiversity of the natural world and to identify and nurture Africa's future conservation champions.

Meet Daniel Nkhumane, the 2022 Public Speaking Competition champion, the Learner Representative Council secretary, and a Grade 11 learner at Sekoba Secondary School in Ga-Masanya Village, Mokopane.

His topic was about rhino poaching!

Daniel's academic life before 2022 gave no indication of what he would achieve. He was on a fast track to becoming a high school dropout. By his own admission, he was not the brightest child in the class and had failed Grade 10 twice. He lacked confidence and was hanging out with friends whom he described as "bad company."

Daniel says, "I decided to stop hanging around with my old friends and start afresh." He made a brave decision to change schools, moving from one a few minutes from his home in Sekoba Secondary School, an hour's walk from where he lived. His application to this school was almost rejected due to his poor academic results, but he was accepted after a teacher convinced the school principal that Daniel deserved a second chance.

Daniel was determined to start anew as he entered Grade 10 at Sekoba Secondary School and his marks started to improve. Lapalala Wilderness School facilitated a public speaking competition about rhino poaching between a number of schools in the region. Daniel was one of the two learners chosen to represent his school. Excited, but lacking in confidence when speaking in public, Daniel conducted all the research for the project but was too shy to present his findings to his classmates and teachers, and an intervention by an educator who believed in him was the only thing that allowed him to stay in the competition.

The competing teams were hosted at Lapalala Wilderness School and the night before the competition Daniel was a bundle of nerves as he felt he did not fully understand the research he had done. Unable to sleep, he decided to practice his presentation in the bathroom of the school, but after five times he was no closer to understanding it and was about to give up.

He pushed on and reveals, "On the seventh time finally there was light at the end of the tunnel and I actually started to understand it. I was so happy, yet still nervous for the following day".

At the start of his presentation, Daniel was gulping down water like a man dying of thirst. This acted as an icebreaker with his audience; boosted his confidence, and he was on his way. Daniel says "I did my level best, and it was like taking a candy from a baby. I did not think I was going to win as other learners presented very well. To my surprise, I won the first prize for the Rhino poaching competition. I kid you not, it was unbelievable, but it was true, we won. Sekoba Secondary won first prize. I was really a happy and great moment for me, and I could not believe it was actually happening."

Daniel was awarded a Certificate of Recognition and a trophy by the school circuit. He was also invited to give a motivational speech to the Grade 12 learners at his school.