



Advisory Note 8

# **Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Systemic Testing Programme**



**Western Cape Education Department**

(Directorate: Research Services)

25 February 2025



## 1. Background and Rationale

The WCED has been conducting systemic tests in Languages and Mathematics for Grades 3 and 6 learners since 2002. The programme started as sample testing of Grade 3 and 6 learners, alternating yearly. In 2006 the testing programme changed to full cohort testing and in 2010 it expanded to include Grade 9. Also, in 2010, the programme was redesigned to test all three grades every year. Tests are administered by independent Service Providers in line with provincial policy. The programme was extended to Grade 9 in 2010. Independent schools have been invited to participate in the testing programme since 2010. Subsidised, independent schools are required to participate while non-subsidised, independent schools participate by invitation. Reports of the outcomes of the tests are issued to all participating Schools, Circuit Managers and Districts.

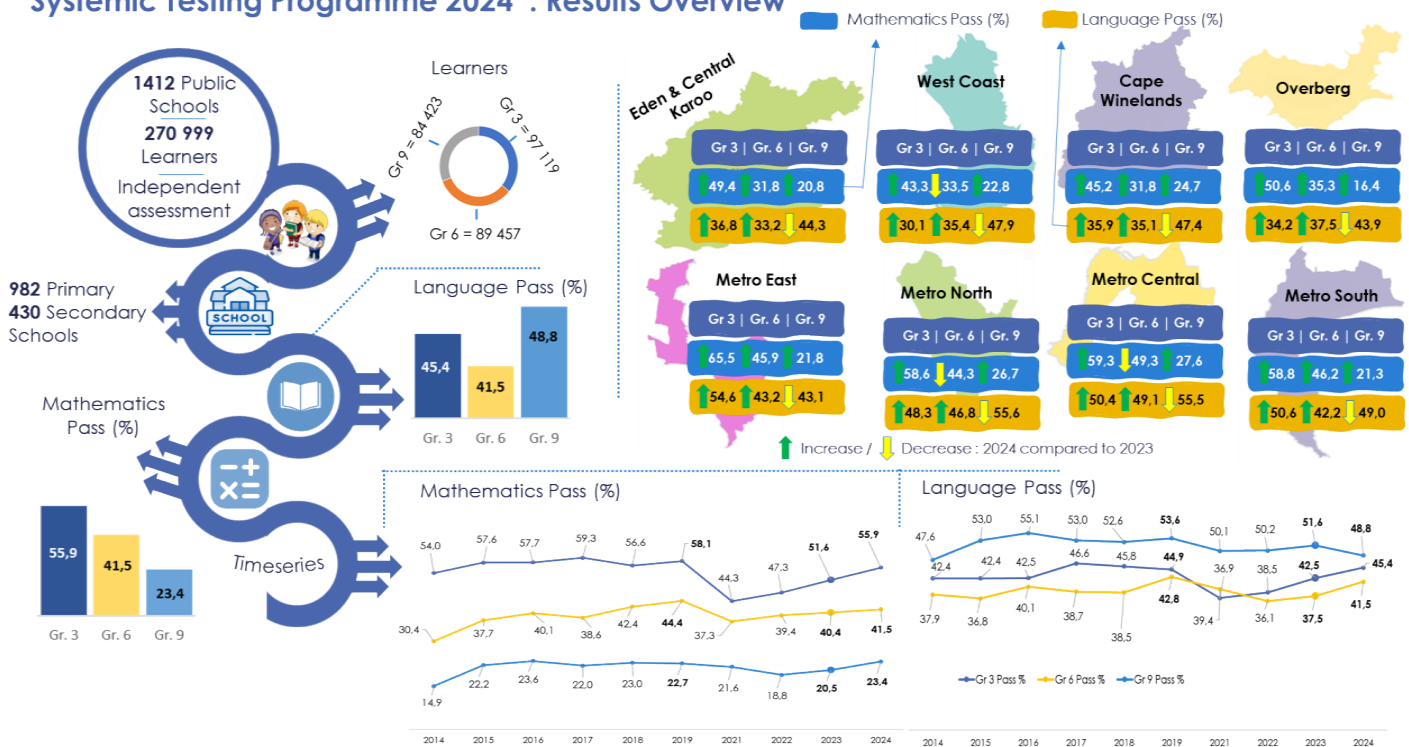
The benefits of this project are the following:

- The output is independently produced data that gives insights into the quality of education delivered to learners and the training needs of educators.
- Such data has become a planning tool for the education department and feeds into various reports such as the APP / AR.
- Monitoring Education System Performance: Potential data source to determine system strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, teaching methods, and resource allocation.
- Data source for conducting independent assessments of initiatives and interventions for example : <https://resep.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/RESEP-Back-on-Track-Report.pdf>
- Benchmarking Learning Outcomes: It allows comparison across schools, districts, and regions to identify disparities in education quality,
- Early Identification of Learning Gaps:
  - » Grade 3 assessments help detect early literacy and numeracy challenges, enabling targeted interventions.
- Grade 6 assessments evaluate progress in middle primary education, ensuring students have acquired the necessary knowledge before secondary education.
- Grade 9 assessments assess readiness for higher secondary education and future academic or career paths.

## 2. Systemic Testing 2024: Summary of Results

- The pass rate for Grade 9 Mathematics increased by 2.9 percentage points compared to 2023 and now exceeds the 2019 score by 0.7 percentage points.
- An increase of 4.3 percentage points for Grade 3 Mathematics, and 1.1 percentage points for Grade 6 Mathematics, compared to 2023.
- Grade 3 Language scores increased by 2.9 percentage points compared to 2023, now exceeding the 2019 pass rate by 0.5 percentage points.
- The pass rate for Grade 6 Language has increased by 4.0 percentage points compared to 2023, reducing the difference with 2019 scores to just 1.3 percentage points.

## Systemic Testing Programme 2024 : Results Overview



### 3. Implementation

#### Frequency

The systemic tests are conducted annually at the beginning of the fourth term. This is to ensure that the tests assess what has been covered in the curriculum.

#### Language

Foundation Phase learners (Grade 3) are tested in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) of the school (English, Afrikaans or Xhosa) for both Language and Mathematics. Grades 6 and 9 learners are tested in the LoLT of the school (English or Afrikaans) for both Language and Mathematics.

#### Sample size

For public ordinary schools, all the Grade 3, 6 & 9 learners in the province participate in the tests except in schools where there are less than 10 learners in a grade because of logistics and budgetary limitations. For special education needs learners, only learners who need extra time, enlarged font and breaks in between are accommodated. For the Independent Schools, participation is mandatory for the schools that receive subsidies from WCED and voluntary for the non-subsidized independent schools.

The table below provides the number of learners who have participated in the WCED language tests in 2019 (before COVID), 2021(after COVID), 2023 and 2024 (for comparison).

<b>Scope Of The WCED Systemic Tests</b>				
<b>Public Ordinary Schools</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 6</b>	<b>Grade 9</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Language 2019	95 452	89 834	70 551	<b>255 837</b>
Language 2021	90 289	91 982	76 330	<b>258 601</b>
Language 2023	97 481	91 270	83 426	<b>272 177</b>
Language 2024	97 098	89 435	84 418	<b>270 951</b>

**Data collection**

Test instruments are developed by a different independent service provider to maintain integrity. The tests are internationally benchmarked, and are administered, marked, and moderated externally to ensure objectivity and to provide a credible and relevant benchmark for evaluation. Mathematics is written first, and the learners come back to write the language after they have been given a break. For all Grades the learner scripts and answer sheets are personalised and colour coded according to the languages and grades. The scripts are taken to the marking center where they are marked by the learner scores are captured electronically. The service provider responsible for administration submits the packaged data to WCED.

**Budget Allocation**

The systemic tests budget is allocated to the administration of the tests and the development of the tests instruments. The current budget for the administration is R 254.7m over three years and for instrument development it is R120m over a period of two years.