

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 222

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Rev K R J Meshoe (ACDP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

- (1) *Whether she has found that the levels of illiteracy and poor reading skills are high; if not, how did she reach the conclusion; if so,*

Current literacy levels in our system range widely from children who have not yet acquired minimum literacy skills to learners who demonstrate excellent reading and writing skills. But the average child still falls below our set targets. The recent Systematic Evaluation results showed that the Foundation Phase average performance in literacy stands at 36% (2007) while at the Intermediate Phase it is 38% (2005). The Department is committed to improving these levels of performance.

- (2) *Whether she or her department has taken any corrective steps to improve literacy levels and poor reading skills; if not, why not; if so, what steps;*

Yes. We have since provided primary schools with a reading kit that includes grade-appropriate individual readers that learners can take home and read to their parents, materials for book corners to create literature-rich environments in the classrooms and reading guides for teachers. Clear guidance has been given to schools to dedicate specific amounts of time to reading on each school day so that development of reading skills is broader than just one teacher teaching learners how to read. Also the workbooks which will be delivered to schools in 2011 are intended to improve literacy. These actions are intended to stimulate a reading culture that must motivate learners to love reading.

- (3) *Whether most schools have their own libraries; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?* NO3151E

According to the National Education Infrastructure Management System, 5 221 schools or 15% of all schools have libraries. The department is addressing the backlogs in the provision of library services in schools through its infrastructure policy, which aims to ensure that the provision of all essential spaces and facilities, including school libraries, are addressed.