



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THUTO



NEWSLETTER

Minister Motshekga visits schools in the Eastern Cape Province



Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, took a walk down memory lane this week as she paid a visit to Mariazell High School in the Eastern Cape Province on 25 January 2018. Minister Motshekga completed her matric at the school 40 years ago and was excited to visit her old stomping ground.

Minister Motshekga also met with the School Management Team to discuss some of the challenges facing the school. The Minister addressed learners at assembly and relayed some of her memories as a teenager at the Catholic school.

The Minister encouraged learners to make the most of the opportunity they have at the school and to network with fellow-pupils as this will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives. The Minister cautioned learners not to get involved in drugs and other social ills and to make something of their lives.

The Minister inspired the learners with stories of her former alma mater and the successful people who emanated from the school, saying that with hard work and dedication, there is no reason why the current crop of Mariazell High School should not reach even greater heights.

The Minister also took the time to thank teachers for their hard work and commitment in delivering quality education to South African children in such a rural setting. The school had, in the past been performing exceptionally well, but results have dropped slightly in the past few years. One of the compelling reasons why the Minister visited the school was to determine the factors that are affecting learner performance to establish a collective mechanism to address them.

The visit was conducted as part of a broader Oversight School Visit and Monitoring Programme aimed at improving school functionality, and to congratulate schools and districts that have achieved excellent results during the 2017 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations, whilst encouraging underperforming schools to pull up their socks during this year. The school visits are organised by the DBE's Provincial Oversight Unit led by Deputy Director-General, Mrs Palesa Tyobeka.

On 26 January 2018, the Minister took her Programme to the OR Tambo Inland District where she visited Zimele High School which performed excellently in the 2017 NSC Examinations. She then moved onto Zangqele Senior Secondary School in Mthata. Minister Motshekga took to the podium to encourage good working relationships between parents, community members, teachers and learners so that quality learning and teaching is prioritised throughout the year. Minister Motshekga engaged with the School Management Team on several issues that have a significant impact on the effective functionality of schools in the Province. Key factors such as drug abuse, road conditions, absenteeism, poor school attendance and school leadership were pinpointed as stumbling blocks for effective school functionality.

In her address to learners at Zimele High School, Minister Motshekga advised learners to prioritise their studies so that they can excel academically. The Minister again pleaded with learners to abstain from sexual activities and drugs, and spend quality time on their school work. "I have never seen any successful person who is a drug addict; please make sure you avoid them in your academic journey," advised Minister Motshekga. The visits concluded at the Airport Hangars where she addressed school principals and district officials.

Basic Education Sector Lekgotla converges to equip learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world



The 21st Century learner requires a specific set of knowledge and skills to tackle the Fourth Industrial Revolution head-on. For this reason, a Basic Education Sector Lekgotla was held at the Saint George Hotel and Conference Centre from 22 to 24 January 2018, to ensure that the contemporary learner is equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for a changing world. Eight Commissions were brainstorming education modalities during this prominent Lekgotla that was attended by senior officials from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), MECs and Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), union members, universities and various other stakeholders.

Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Mothekga, said: “We are presented with an opportunity to engage on education issues. The future of education hinges on their collective wisdom to ensure that no child is left behind; the classroom remains the place where learning and teaching happens.” Minister Motshekga further emphasised the importance of benchmarking the South African education sector against international assessments such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ).

For this reason, Professor Sarah Howie, Director at the Africa Centre of Scholarship, Stellenbosch University, presented a summary of the PIRLS reports for 2006, 2011 and 2016. Although there is a slow, but steady upward trend, nearly eight out of ten South African children cannot read for meaning when compared to international benchmarks. “It is important to increase time spent on reading in the Foundation and the Intermediate Phases, to look at class sizes, increase school libraries, accelerate ICT provision in Primary Schools and support to African Languages, and to reduce teacher and learner absenteeism at primary schools,” advised Professor Howie.

Basic Education Deputy Minister, Mr Enver Surty, emphasised the importance of teaching the skills necessary in preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution for alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Development Plan (NDP).

Professor Volmink, Chair of the Umalusi Council, congratulated the DBE on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination results, adding that the modernisation of classrooms and teaching approaches in South Africa should be accompanied by methodologies relating to decolonisation, Ubuntu, social cohesion, humane universalism and the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems.

The objectives of the Lekgotla included the identification of techniques and methods to promote entrepreneurship in the teaching and learning of all subjects; the development of measures to promote good governance in schools, effective teacher development programmes and the utilisation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools; and ensuring that all remnants of colonial education is removed from the curriculum for teaching and learning to be based on the African Epistemology.



DBE to prioritise skills for a changing world of entrepreneurship

In his presentation at the Basic Education Sector Lekgotla the Director-General for Basic Education, Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mweli, provided the strategic direction for an education system on the rise. Mr Mweli highlighted redress, access, equity, efficiency and quality with the golden thread of inclusivity running through all of these approaches, as a means to attain the NDP 2030 objectives.

Mr Mweli quoted Professor Vuyisile Msila from his book, *Decolonising Knowledge for Africa's Renewal* saying, “The decolonisation of the curriculum entails and implies a number of things. Firstly, it entails changing the mind-set of the teaching staff. The decolonisation project will stall, and the curriculum will hardly change, without the positive mind-set of the teaching staff. This means the necessary development of a colonial consciousness and this is the true ‘mother of all’ challenges when it comes to curriculum transformation. All other things will follow when the teacher embraces and believes in the new ecological paths.” Mr Mweli also advocated the reAfricanisation of the curriculum.

The future competencies and the curriculum should include lifelong learning; entrepreneurship, problem-solving, innovation, accountability and self-management, to name but a few. Life Orientation equips and guides learners towards meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society, covering personal and social well-being, Human Rights and Social Justice.

South Africa currently has the lowest levels of entrepreneurship in Africa. During the Fourth Industrial Revolution based on the use of cyber-physical systems, learners and teachers should focus on their transformation into global citizens with a focus on the neuroscience of learning. Brain science is informing new approaches to learning. Also, teachers should be teaching “with poverty in mind” with longer hours in class, teaching and offering learner support in the classroom.

The DG's strategic plans for the sector was well supported by a presentation on Entrepreneurship and 21st Century Skills by Mr Godwin Khosa, CEO of the National Education Collaboration Trust and Dr Taddy Blecher, CEO of the Maharishi Institute. The main focus of their presentation was the launch of the entrepreneurship in schools initiative (EiS). The DBE will be incorporating the *Sector Plan for Entrepreneurship Education in Schools: 2030* into the National School System. The focus on Entrepreneurship Education is to develop innovative, independent learners who will become competent employers and employees.

Lekgotla Commissions exchange views on progress and shortcomings in the education sector



The eight Basic Education Sector Lekgotla Commissions created a platform for education stakeholders to engage in robust discussions on shortcomings and factors affecting quality learning and teaching in schools. Education stakeholders were expected to identify concrete actions to accelerate the achievement of the NDP goals and objectives.

The Lekgotla concentrated on various key components of basic education, including language teaching, the Mathematics intake and participation rate and school safety. Another aspect that received special attention was the improvement of reading levels in both English and African Indigenous Languages from the Foundation Phase onwards. Additional programmes that were discussed during the Lekgotla included the improvement of School Based Assessment, the expansion of ICT connectivity in schools, learner admission and the recruitment of vibrant teachers through the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme.

The two day deliberations explored critical strategies to improve quality learning and teaching in public schools. The promotion of a reading for meaning culture dominated discussions in several commissions. The following views were shared by DBE Senior Managers during the course of these sessions.

Lekgotla Commissions



Chief Director for National Assessment and Public Examinations, Dr Rufus Poliah: “We are here today to exchange ideas in the field of assessment with a view to promoting the quality and standard of assessment across the country. Our aim is to improve the credibility of public examinations and to ensure that School Based Assessment (SBA) is reliable and valid. A reliable SBA programme will ensure that learners are better prepared for the final external NSC Examinations. We are also focussing on developing analytical, problem-solving and innovative learners, and the role of assessment in this regard must be clearly mapped out. If teachers assess learners appropriately and accurately, they will stand a chance to identify challenges and deal with problems well in advance. As part of improving learning outcomes and School Based Assessment, the DBE has finalised an assessment model through which a systemic evaluation will be carried out. In 2018, the systemic assessment test will be piloted in selected schools and will be followed by a full scale implementation in 2019.”

Chief Director for Curriculum Implementation and Quality Improvement Enhancement Programmes, Mr Seliki Tlhabane: “We are proud to mention that the Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) participation rate has increased rapidly since 1994. Our NSC results reveal an encouraging increase in the MST subjects on an annual basis. More than 150,000 learners achieved quality passes during the 2017 NSC Examinations. We commend the KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State Provinces for their contribution towards increasing participation and the throughput rate in these subjects. Through these commissions, we are aiming to consolidate recommendations and input to empower the education system in achieving quality and efficiency going forward.”

CES for the Curriculum Innovation and e-Learning, Mr Henry Kavuma: “The Basic Education Sector has made inroads in improving the roll-out of ICT in schools. The DBE is engaged in discussions with the Vodacom Foundation and MTN in consolidating Grades 10 to 12 Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) into the DBE Cloud, an educational portal that provides access to digital education resources. Approximately 15,000 schools have already been connected to ICTs. The Department will be intensifying the training of Subject Specialists in the integration of ICTs to assist them to guide teachers on the integration of ICTs in teaching and learning. The DBE, in partnership with the South African Post Office, will soon be rolling out broadband to 4,544 schools across all nine provinces. This move will accelerate digital learning in our schools.”

Chief Education Specialist for Curriculum Implementation and Quality Improvement (FET, English), Mr Bulara Monyaki: “Through this commission we want to consolidate recommendations which should address challenges in language teaching and performance. Improved performance in language teaching and learning should enhance learner attainment as languages are crucial to progression. We need to look at ways of strengthening the language of teaching and learning, as well as the use of language across the curriculum. This will enhance a learners’ ability to decode the knowledge and concepts in all their subjects. We are assured that at the end of this Lekgotla we would have consolidated several strategies which will assist teachers with the teaching of all the official languages, which include Indigenous African Languages.”

Director for the Early Childhood Development Directorate, Mrs Marie-Louise Samuels: “The education system has come a long way in terms of improving Early Childhood Development (ECD) in our communities. We recently introduced the National Curriculum Framework for Children from birth to 4 years (NCF), which will assist us in regulating and monitoring the curriculum offered at all ECD Centres across the country. Our goal is not only to improve the quality of the comprehensive package of services offered at these centres, but to increase access to these services so that children, including those with special needs, could be accommodated. Approximately a million children are accommodated at various ECD Centres in all nine provinces. Thus far, we have trained more than 21,000 ECD teachers to groom children before entering the education system. It is critical that parents are taken on board to contribute to their children’s academic journey. We are proud to announce that more than 900,000 children are afforded an opportunity to acquire Grade R schooling.”

The Basic Education Sector Lekgotla concluded with reports from various rapporteurs on the discussions and input emanating from the commission sessions. These reports will be consolidated into a holistic strategic document.



Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme restores the dignity of the teaching profession in South Africa



Critical teacher shortages in specified subject areas and school phases are being addressed through the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme. During the 2017 academic year, approximately 15,127 Funza Lushaka bursaries were awarded to students. Approximately 11,000 bursaries have been awarded to returning students with the balance being allocated to new bursary holders. More than 63,000 bursary applications have been received for the 2018 academic year by 06 January 2018. Applications for the 2018 academic year closed on 12 January 2018.

During the 2017 financial year, a total of just over R1 billion was allocated for the Programme. The Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme provides fixed bursary values that cover student tuition fees; accommodation fees (including meals); learning material; and a R600 per month stipend to cover basic living expenses.

The Programme has contributed to a substantial increase in the uptake of initial teacher education programmes at universities. In recent years, attention has shifted from a general concern over having a sufficient number of teachers to a concern about having teacher shortages in specific subject areas and school phases.

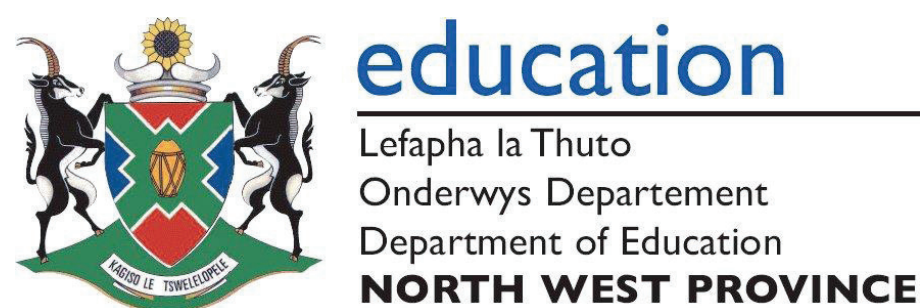
Director for Initial Teacher Education, Mr Gerrit Coetzee, said that, "I believe that to be a teacher is a calling. I am reminded of one of our bursary holders who obtained seven distinctions in the NSC Examinations, including Mathematics and Physical Science. She could have pursued any other profession, but she chose to become a Foundation Phase teacher because it was her heart's desire to shape the lives of young children. Becoming a teacher should never be a compromise, teaching is a noble profession."



Provincial Round-up

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) recently reported that school vandalism had been costing the Department more than R600,000 in damages with thirty-two incidents of vandalism having been recorded over the recent holiday period. Two of the 32 incidents are classified as major with the estimated repair cost above R100,000 and the school's ability to function being impacted. In a statement issued by the Department, WCED MEC, Debbie Schäfer, expressed her concern over the destruction, looting and vandalism in schools across the Province: "A school is a community asset and while we do all that we can to safeguard our schools with additional security measures, we cannot win the fight against school burglary and vandalism without increased support from the South African Police Service and the school communities". The WCED therefore urged community members to be extra vigilant throughout the year, to immediately report any suspicious behaviour and to assist the Province to protect schools against criminals.

North West Province



The North West Education and Sport Development Department reported that, although the Province's NSC Examination results have declined by 3.06%, Education MEC, Mr Sello Lehari and his competent education team, remain committed to improve learning and teaching in the Province. The Province also lost valuable contact time for learning and teaching due to civil protests. The Department has planned a series of intervention meetings with principals, teachers, District Directors and various other stakeholders to investigate the decline in the results. A session or retreat will be held to investigate the performance of the Department as a whole, and a turnaround strategy will be communicated as a way forward.

Upcoming Events

- 29 January 2018: Basic Education Deputy Minister, Mr Enver Surty, will be embarking on a School Readiness Oversight and Monitoring Visit Programme in the Northern Cape Province
- 30 January 2018: Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, will be embarking on a School Readiness Oversight and Monitoring Visit Programme in the Free State Province
- 31 January 2018: Closing date for the registration of the 2018 Senior Certificate (amended) Examinations
- 01 February 2018: World Read Aloud Day (WRAD) will be hosted at Mofolo Park, Soweto in the Gauteng Province
- 17 February 2018: The national ceremony of the 18th Annual National Teaching Awards (NTAs) will be taking place at the 5th Floor Pavilion, Sandton Convention Centre, Sandton, Gauteng Province
- 01 – 31 March 2018: School Governing Body (SGB) Elections



**NDP 2030: one nation,
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