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THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION



NEWSLETTER

Sharing best practice with the Argentine Republic on COVID-19



Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, recently attended a virtual session with the Minister of Education of the Argentine Republic, Dr Nicolas Trotta, to discuss the preventative measures and protocols put in place in South African schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Argentina enforced a compulsory nation-wide lockdown on 20 March 2020; however, the dates have been repeatedly extended to mitigate the spread of the virus in the country. Argentina has been ranked number 10 of the top 10 countries mostly affected, and with the highest number of COVID-19 cases.

During the discussions, best practice was shared in respect of measures taken by South Africa to restart face-to-face school classes; challenges and lessons learnt in the implementation of general protocol practices; and the differences in approach between the various provinces in rural and urban schools. Dr Pablo Gentili, Secretary for Educational Cooperation and Priority Actions and His Excellency, Mr Alberto D'Alotto, Ambassador of the Argentine Republic in South Africa and South Africa Ambassador to the Argentine Republic, Her Excellency, Ms Phumelele Gwala, also attended the session.

Minister Motshekga explained that the main priority during the COVID-19 lockdown period was for learners to return to school to receive quality education in a safe and caring environment. "Unfortunately, there are many risks associated with learners staying at home for such an extended period, such as teenage pregnancies, substance and child abuse and loitering to name a few. Water supply and infrastructure also presented us with challenges. The DBE used a phased-in approach as class sizes had to be reduced due to physical distancing. We subsequently installed water tanks at rural schools and provided each learner with two masks. In addition, they were scanned upon arrival at school daily. During August 2020, schools opened for all learners. COVID-19 remains a challenge in our schools, and the pandemic has eaten into our curriculum coverage time. With the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations commencing on 5 November 2020, we have instituted many intervention programmes such as Saturday and Sunday classes, to ensure that our Class of 2020 is ready to face the future, fully equipped."

The two countries agreed to establish a knowledge sharing platform that will look at the process of reopening schools as well as plan for the 2021 school calendar. This will include countries in the Southern Hemisphere. Going forward, South Africa and Argentina will look into signing a Memorandum of Understanding for co-operation within the Education Sector and the work on Human Rights will be at the forefront of the cooperation. Dr Nicolas Trotta commended SA on the breakthrough made in respect of Human Rights, democracy, as well as the education system, and the National Reading Campaign and COVID-19 prevention measures in schools, in particular.

DG Mweli applauds teachers for their efforts in supporting the Class of 2020



The DBE is confident that the impact of the national and provincial intervention support provided as part of the Matric Catch-Up Programme will be felt during the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations. After having faced COVID-19 challenges, the Basic Education Sector pulled out all the stops to assist the one million Grade 12 learners who will be commencing with the NSC Examinations.

Director-General for the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mweli, recently undertook a visit to various weekend classes in the Limpopo and Gauteng provinces to assess the state of learner readiness as the Grade 12 learners prepared for the NSC Examinations. During his visits, Mr Mweli said that the DBE and Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) are satisfied with progress made by various education districts in strengthening curriculum coverage in all Saturday and Sunday classes. In some districts, the emphasis has been placed on improving the performance amongst progressed and borderline learners who performed below level 3. The education districts target these categories of learners to increase the number of learners qualifying for a Bachelor Degree pass.

Speaking during his visit, Mr Mweli said that the element of social distancing and adherence to other COVID-19 regulations were sustained in all centres, adding that, “all provinces are ready for the NSC Examinations. However, the system will be tested when the majority of learners will be sitting for their examinations on 05 November 2020. The DBE and PEDs would be in better position to deal with any matter that might arise during these examinations. Special arrangements have been made to accommodate learners in community halls and churches where necessary”. Mr Mweli further acknowledged the sacrifices and efforts made by the teachers in assisting Grade 12 learners as they revised the curriculum content covered during the previous months.

Several learners reflected on their experiences in the weekend classes, saying that the Matric Catch-Up Programme emerged as an opportunity for them to pursue their academic dreams. Sthembiso Mashaphu, a Grade 12 learner at Phusela High School, said that the weekend classes were useful in assisting Grade 12 learners in recovering the teaching time lost due to COVID-19. He indicated that, through the national and provincial interventions, he could revise most of the challenging topics in Mathematics and Physical Science. “I am grateful to the Director-General for having visited our province; I feel inspired and I am sure that I will be able to achieve excellent results this year”, he said.



DBE and PEDs assist schools to access online resources ahead of the NSC Examinations



The DBE and Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) are satisfied with progress made by the Grade 12 learners during Saturday and Sunday catch-up classes. Director for *Curriculum Implementation and Quality Improvement-FET*, Ms Cheryl Weston, commended teachers and education district officials for embracing the Matric intervention programmes as key levers in pushing learners to cover the 2020 curriculum impacted on by COVID-19.

“One of the biggest interventions to support learners annually is the vacation schools that are historically offered during the autumn, winter and spring holidays, as well as extra classes offered on weekends. These classes provide learners with a minimum of 20 additional days of dedicated teaching and learning over and above the allocated school days,” said Ms Weston.

“As part of its intervention support around the COVID-19 pandemic, DBE initiated a television broadcast support programme in April, during lockdown level 5, which included lessons from Term 1 in subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Accounting, Economics and Life Sciences. In addition, a dedicated webpage was created with all the online resources available including study guides, past question papers, radio lessons, revision guides and notes on challenging topics. Many educational partners also offered various zero-rated online resources to learners. Provinces provided printed copies of study guides, notes, question papers and memoranda, prior to schools closing for the March holidays. In collaboration with the SABC, national, regional and community radio stations, the Basic Education Sector ensured that radio lessons were offered on a daily basis since 1 May 2020. Provinces also offered broadcast lessons, using virtual platforms such as the Telematics programme of the Western Cape and the Internet Broadcast programme of the Free State. Both these programmes have played an integral role in strengthening the provincial learner support programmes,” she added.

Ms Weston explained that the DBE programmes culminated in the #WOZAMATRICS programme that broadcast lessons for 10 subjects daily, including weekends from 1 September to 30 November. The programme flights on SABC 3, OVHD channel 122, and a number of DSTV bouquets. The intensity and frequency of the lessons is significantly increased as the countdown towards the examination continues. In addition, provinces provided devices, pre-loaded with content, to learners to support learning at home. Subject-related content resources include lesson plans, summary notes, question and answer banks and terminology lists to support and enhance conceptual understanding.

Face-to-face Second Chance Matric Support Programme classes underway in education districts



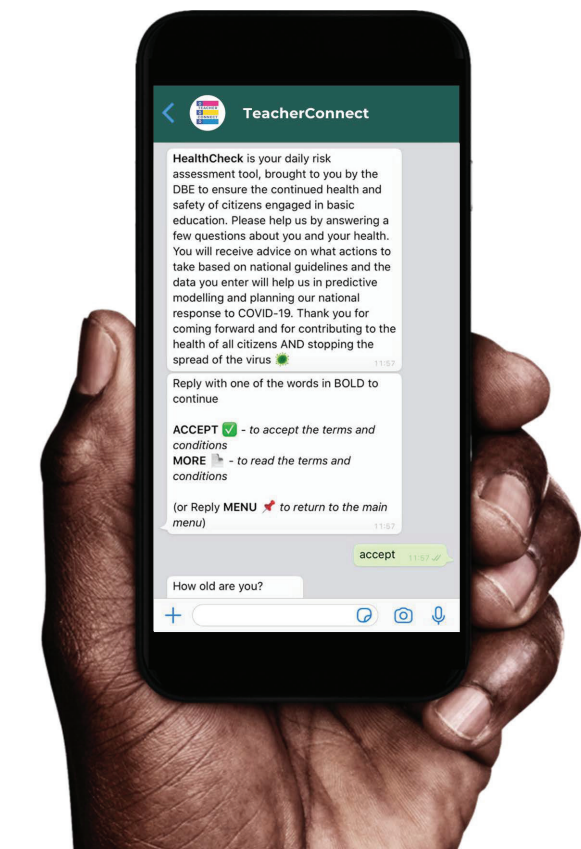
The Second Chance Matric Support Programme (SCMSP) continues to recruit droves of young adults who failed to meet the requirements of the NSC Examinations. The SCMSP is designed to assist the Department to achieve its goals by providing learners who did not meet the requirements of the National Senior Certificate (NSC), or those who wish to upgrade, with a second chance at achieving a Grade 12 qualification.

Through the blended approach, the SCMSP offers face-to-face classes at selected venues for a limited period across the country; online and offline digital support; limited copies of printed high-quality resources; and broadcasting solutions, which include both television and radio lessons. The face-to-face classes are up and running in most education districts in South Africa.

Director for the SCMSP, Dr Sandy Malapile, applauded provinces for having made progress in strengthening the effective implementation of the Programme, irrespective of the challenges posed by COVID-19. He confirmed that significant intervention support has been provided at district level to assist candidates who registered for the Programme in preparing for the NSC Examinations.

In response to circumstances relating to COVID-19, the DBE and PEDs provided blended support to adult learners to improve curriculum coverage in various subjects. This blended approach offers face-to-face classes at 133 selected venues across the country, for a limited period. The support is also offered online and offline through limited copies of high-quality printed resources, as well as broadcasting solutions which include both television and radio lessons. A second chance learner is expected to take full responsibility for their learning and utilise the platforms created by the Programme to utilise the high-quality resources aimed at preparing them for the relevant examinations.

Schools can now conduct daily COVID-19 screening using Healthcheck



Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, launched TeacherConnect during September 2020. This is a WhatsApp-based platform, developed to empower and support teachers and schools through providing access to the best learning content in an ultra-convenient place - WhatsApp! A key feature of the Teacher Connect app is *HealthCheck*. This is an online or e-screening daily assessment tool to ensure the continued health and safety of everyone in school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the launch, the Department and its partners, E-cubed and the Praekelt Foundation, has worked hard over the past weeks to improve the utility and efficiency of *HealthCheck*.

To date, the following useful features are live on *HealthCheck*:

- **Daily Online or e-screening Tool:** This feature allows users to conduct self-screening for COVID-19, and can be used by educators, learners who are 12 years and older, parents on behalf of learners, school support staff, and parents and officials who are visitors. After completion, users receive an immediate digital result or receipt on their risk level for COVID-19. The risk can be low, medium or high and is valid for 24 hours. Health tips as well as advice on any next steps is provided. A parent can complete the screening for more than one learner, from the same or different schools, before they leave for school. This can speed-up access into the school in the mornings through showing the digital receipt on a cellphone to the screener(s).
- **Learner, Teacher and Parent Q&A and Information Dissemination:** This feature has frequently asked questions (FAQs) for parents, learners and educators/principals on COVID-19 and schooling. Key sector guidelines and also general health information and advice relating to COVID-19.

HealthCheck allows for confidentiality of information, as well as for education managers to assess the collated risk profile of schools, districts and provinces in order to intervene where indicated.

To use *HealthCheck*, save the number 0600 60 33 33 in your contacts; WhatsApp the word “Hi” to 0600 60 33 33; Type the word “CHECK” from the menu and follow the prompts to answer the self-screening questions.

All education officials are encouraged to start using *HealthCheck* and spread the word to educators, learners, parents and our stakeholders to also do the same. This way, we can ensure that we keep our teachers, children, staff and schools safe from the virus.

Continuing teacher development and support for the digital age

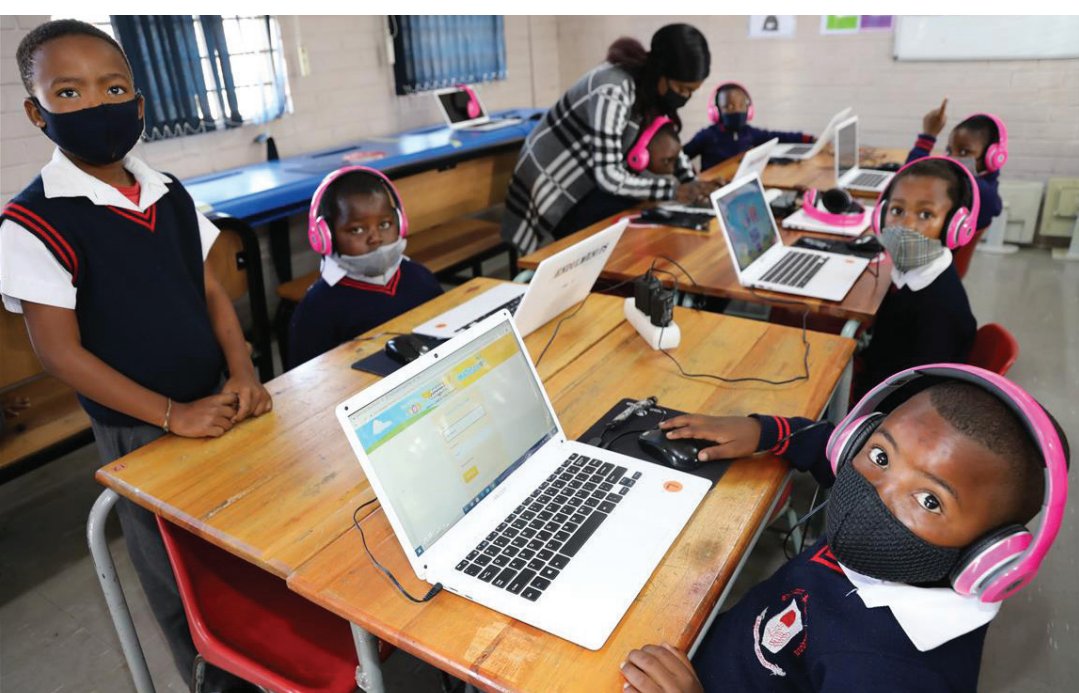


The COVID-19 pandemic has fast-tracked digital learning and virtual teaching globally. It is now more than ever, essential for teachers to be digitally trained and skilled for the 21st Century classroom. During October Teacher Appreciation Month, the DBE recommits itself to continued teacher training and the development of our teachers, the heart of the classroom. Two DBE partnerships that have pulled out all the stops in support of teacher development are the British Council and The Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB) Education for Development.

The VVOB, along with the DBE, contributes to poverty reduction and to a fairer world with increased education opportunities for all. VVOB's Bambanani video series recently won the Digital4Development (D4D) international award for outstanding initiatives using digitisation for development towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mr Sven Rooms,

VVOB's General Director, received the award from the newly appointed Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation, Meryame Kitir. In partnership with the DBE, practical examples of inclusive education were developed, encouraging teachers to embrace diversity in the classroom to promote inclusive education strategies in South African teaching. The Bambanani video series looks inside a South African classroom and discovers how teachers are adapting their methodologies, lesson content and assessment strategies to help all students learn reading and arithmetic. The Bambanani series is available in English, with subtitles in Sesotho, isiZulu and isiXhosa.

Since July 2014 the DBE and the British Council have been supporting the roll-out of the Learn English Audio Project (LEAP) to districts around the country. LEAP has trained 1,000 educators in 394 schools across seven provinces to date. LEAP consists of audio lessons and wrap-around support material for grade R-4 mapped to the DBE workbooks and has been provided on solar-powered Life players, USBs and SD cards. Ms Joanne Newton, Programme Manager: English for Education Systems, British Council, gave an exciting update on recent developments in LEAP, saying that LEAP is now on WhatsApp. How does this work? The number +27 600789309 can be saved and dialled, and ZA selected for South African users. Audio lessons, songs or stories can then be selected using emotives. LEAP will also be available on the DBE Channel TV in the form of animated lessons. LEAP Guidebooks will be ready as from the end of 2020 and Master Teaching and online training programmes are anticipated to grow LEAP in provinces.



Wellness workshop to create resilient teachers in a wounded society



The DBE is committed to enhancing the psychosocial wellness of our teachers through creating resilient teachers in a wounded society. During October Teacher Appreciation Month, an online workshop to assist teachers in this regard, took place on 15 October 2020. Director for Continuing Professional Teacher Development at the DBE, Ms Veronica Hofmeester, explained that, “the COVID-19 Pandemic sadly reminded us that no person is exempt in a crisis, and that teachers, the leaders in the Education Sector, require not only professional, but also psychosocial support to face the various challenges that they encounter on a daily basis”.

Ms Nomfundo Mogapi from the Centre for Mental Wellness and Leadership, presented the online workshop saying that, “the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the plight and has changed the role of teachers within society. The welfare of our teachers has been compromised; they are discouraged, anxious, exhausted and suffer from burnout and fatigue. Substance abuse, violence, bullying and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is making it difficult for them to remain resilient in the classroom, intensifying the “depleted teacher crisis”. Strategies must be identified to respond to this crisis. The wound inflicted on the teacher is patriarchal (toxic masculinity), intergenerational, societal, historical and institutional. Families are no longer sources of refuge, and *wounds* are being transferred to the next generation. Behaviour is subsequently triggered as exaggerated responses by both teachers and learners, perpetuating the cycle of desperation and violence.”

“Teacher training remains our only way to tackle this challenge. Teachers need to be trained strategies of self-transformation through counselling to heal themselves firstly, and then to heal others. In schools, strategies must be taught to transform organisational toxicity, interpersonal conflicts, systems and processes for teachers to become peace carriers instead of trauma carriers. Buddy systems and Professional Learning Communities should equip our teachers with the practical skills required to teach them to breathe correctly, use the counselling opportunities available to them and to empower themselves and others. It is crucial for them to receive orientation and feedback and for their roles and responsibilities, to be clearly defined. In addition, continued feedback is required, as well as holistic wellness training,” Ms Mogapi concluded.

DBE officials acknowledge the role played by teachers during Teacher Appreciation Month

As activities linked to October Teacher Appreciation Month and the Teacher Appreciation and Support Programme (TASP) continue, several DBE officials acknowledged the role played by the teachers in the development of human potential.

Deputy Director for Initial Teacher Education, Mr Mishumo Mamburu said: “I can confidently say that I am who I am today because of the selfless teachings and guidance of the teachers who taught me from primary school through to secondary school level. These are the people who made me realise that even if one comes from a poverty-stricken community, it is still possible to contribute to the broader developmental agenda of a country and beyond. To single out one teacher, my Grade 12 Geography teacher, the late Mr Fhatuwani Ramboho, I could enjoy Geography as a subject. He was always extensive in explaining concepts, using the Tshivenda Language. I wish we could do more to promote official languages in the teaching profession”.







Director for Curriculum Implementation and Quality Improvement-FET, Ms Cheryl Weston, had the following to say: “Teachers are critical in the transformation of society. We are all who we are because teachers sacrificed and presented us with opportunities to become the best versions of ourselves. Many teachers chose teaching as a career because of the influence of other teachers, and I am no different. My own journey towards becoming a teacher was inspired by other teachers.”

Mr Gerrit Coetzee, Director for Initial Teacher Education, said that, “although I was, in Grade 2, diagnosed with so many learning difficulties that many believed I will never succeed in a main stream classroom, my teacher, Ms Kemp paved a way for me. She believed that I would succeed and never gave up on me. She invested many precious hours in remedial activities that helped me to overcome challenges and provided a foundation for further learning. Ms Kemp reminds me of one of our Funza Lushaka bursary holders who has obtained seven distinctions in the NSC Examinations, including Mathematics and Physical Science. She could have pursued some of the highest paid professions 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, it should always be your first choice. Applications for the Funza Lushaka bursary are now open until 28 February 2021. Apply at www.funzalushaka.doe.gov.za”.

DBE salutes the commitment of food handlers to enhance NSNP in schools

COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR VOLUNTEER FOOD HANDLERS

Rules to be followed during meal preparation to prevent/minimise the spread of Corona Virus

1 	Volunteer Food Handlers must wear clean NSNP Protective Clothing <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Including aprons, head gear that cover all hairs, cloth face mask and boots	2 	Wash hands <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Regularly with soap and running water ONLY✓ before and after each process e.g. preparation, cooking, serving✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth and hair
3 	Maintain Social/Physical Distancing <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ In the kitchen; and✓ when learners queue to receive meals	4 	Is your Kitchen Clean <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Disinfect/Wipe work tops or surfaces with a dishcloth dipped in hot, soapy water with bleach✓ Sweep and mop floors with water and soap daily, before and after preparations✓ Clean as you go✓ Wash dish cloths and towels daily in hot, soapy water with jik or domestos
5 	Wash vegetables and fruits always with Clean and safe water <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Clean and safe water	6 	Separate raw food from cooked food <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use separate cutting boards for vegetables and meat✓ Separate cooked and raw foods when preparing and storing them
7 	When Serving meals <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use clean utensils✓ Learners not to share plates✓ Learners must eat inside classrooms	8 	Clean Cooking and Eating utensils <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Wash equipment and utensils after use with warm, soapy water and jik✓ Rinse thoroughly with clean water✓ Leave to drip dry or dry with a clean dishcloth
9 	When you cough or sneeze <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper.✓ Throw the tissue paper in a dust bin and wash your hands thoroughly; or✓ Cough or sneeze into a bent elbow	10 	Waste Management <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Dispose waste daily✓ Clean waste bins daily with hot soapy water✓ Keep waste in covered containers away from the food preparation area to avoid contamination

The DBE's National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) continues to address issues of food insecurity in several school communities. Apart from feeding more than 9 million learners, the NSNP continues to create job opportunities for over 61,000 Volunteer Food Handlers (VFHs) who are responsible for preparing and serving healthy meals to learners.

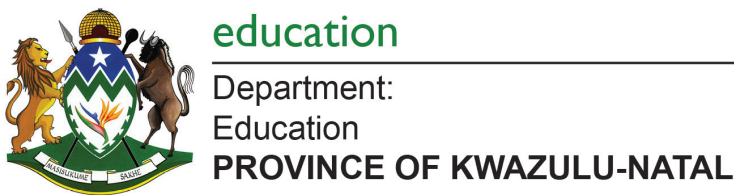
Director for the NSNP, Ms Neo Sediti, acknowledged the significant contribution made by VFHs across all nine provinces saying, "the VFHs are the backbone of the NSNP because, without them, no meals will be served in schools. What they managed to achieve is commendable because they have worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 conditions and showed commitment, giving their best even under very difficult and demanding conditions. In some instances, their roles and responsibilities were over-stretched from preparing and serving meals in line with the COVID-19 protocols in adhering to social distancing measures, especially within kitchens with limited space.

"In addition, they have a responsibility to keep food premises clean and well ventilated; clean cooking surfaces before starting work; and carefully inspect fruit and vegetables before cooking. They also had the added responsibility of acting as *queue marshals*, managing learners as they collected their NSNP meals. Their working hours were more than what their terms of engagement stipulated, working more than 5 hours per day whilst remaining at the schools even after the DBE and teacher organisations announced that educators should not report for duty. In this regard, provinces were given a directive for a slight increase in their monthly stipend in respect of the NSNP budget," explained Ms Sediti.

Like all members of society, VFHs are required to adapt to work towards a *new normal*. Although health and hygiene is a general practice in daily NSNP implementation, they are expected to take extra precautions in respect of health and safety standards, regularly washing their hands, cleaning cooking surfaces and serving food. Protective clothing has become compulsory, including the use of masks while preparing, cooking and serving food. The DBE honours the role that VFHs play towards making the NSNP functional, amid COVID-19, ensuring that the nutritional needs of learners continued to be met even under difficult circumstances during teaching and learning in schools.

Provincial Round-up

KwaZulu-Natal Province



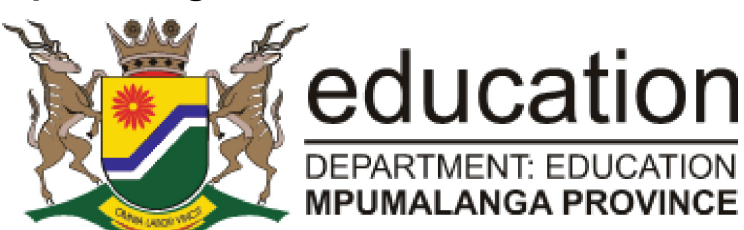
KwaZulu-Natal Education MEC, Kwazi Mshengu, received a donation of 20,00 library books from SONY-USA. The KZN Department of Education partnered with SONY-USA to ensure that schools across the province have access to quality reading material, and that school libraries are well-stocked with valuable books. “We want our readers to read with understanding whilst enjoying reading. Reading builds vocabulary, fluency and knowledge. We will continue to do our part to encourage independent reading in schools,” said MEC Mshengu, speaking at the ceremony that took place at the Durban Harbour on 21 October 2020.

Limpopo Province



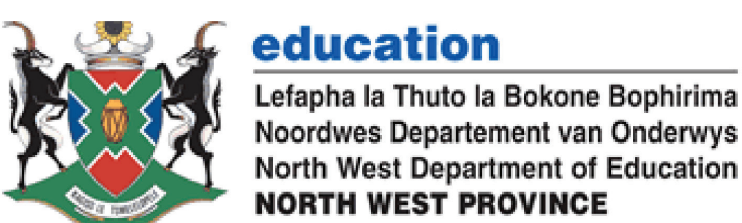
The Limpopo Department of Education has issued a directive to schools to resume with Saturday and Spring holiday enrichment classes. This forms part of the last push intervention strategy to support Grade 12 learners who will be sitting for the 2020 NSC Examinations. Saturday classes are planned for 17, 24 and 31 October, and Spring enrichment classes scheduled for 26 to 30 October 2020. The focus of these enrichment classes is to support learners in subject areas which they struggled with during trial examinations. The Department had, as part of its 2020 Learner Attainment Strategy commenced with Saturday and Spring classes for grade 12 learners during August; however, the programme had to be suspended in a number of schools due to the commencement of the Preliminary Examinations. Limpopo Education MEC, Polly Boshielo, has visited several schools and shall continue to do so to motivate matriculants ahead of the final examination. “All it takes is hard work and more hard work to make it in this life. Your focus now is to commit and dedicate yourselves to achieve the best results possible. We remain mindful of the ever present risk of COVID-19, and continue to ensure that schools conduct these enrichment sessions within our sector’s standard operating procedures on the prevention and management of the pandemic”, said MEC Boshielo.

Mpumalanga Province



The Mpumalanga Department of Education received a donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE’s) worth R2.2 million donated by Anglo American Coal South Africa at Witbank High School on 20 October 2020. This donation will benefit a total of 45 schools within Emalahleni and Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. In addition, the schools will also be fumigated by the same company as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “This kind of support is greatly appreciated and needed as it improves the conditions for the delivery of teaching and learning, whilst at the same time, leaving a timeless legacy. May this partnership develop and grow even beyond this point as we continue in our quest to make education everyone’s enterprise,” said MEC Bonakele Majuba.

North-West Province



In an endeavour to ensure that all Grade 12 learners pass the NSC Examinations, the North-West Department of Education has analysed the Preliminary Examination results of all schools, including farm schools. MEC Mmaphefo Matsemela, accompanied by a team of curriculum experts, visited Naupoort and Iterelong Secondary Schools, both farm schools, in the Rustenburg area on 21 October 2020. Both these schools obtained an average exceeding a 60% pass rate. Iterelong Secondary School obtained a 69% pass rate, whilst Naupoort Secondary School obtained a 87.8% pass rate. “I am on a roadshow of analysing the performance of the farm schools. So far, I am hopeful that, as a province, we are going to do well in the NSC Examinations at the end of the year. We have observed that many learners have passed well and there are few who require serious intervention. We have recommended to schools that learners who have social challenges should receive psychosocial support from the department. In addition, we have also recommended that learners formulate study groups to help each other during the study period”, said MEC Matsemela.

Upcoming Events

- October 2020: Teacher Appreciation Month will be celebrated in the Education Sector
- October 2020: Transport Month will be commemorated
- 30 October 2020: Closure of October Teachers' Month
- 03 November – 03 December 2020: November 2020: South Africans will be celebrating Disability Rights Awareness Month
- 05 November – 15 December 2020: Grade 12 learners will be writing their NSC Examinations
- 25 November – 10 December 2020: The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign (16 Days Campaign) takes place annually from 25 November (International Day of No Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day).
- 1 December 2020: World Aids Day will be commemorated
- 3 December 2020: International Day for Persons with Disabilities will be commemorated

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