

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1503.

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1503. Mr S L Ngcobo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(1) Whether, considering that the results of the 2023 Reading Panel background report for the 2030 Reading Panel indicates that 82% of Grade 4 children in the Republic cannot read for meaning, which has increased from the 78% that was recorded in 2016, she will furnish Mr S L Ngcobo with an overview of the measures that her department has implemented to address the reading challenge since 2016; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) (a) what factors have led to the steep deterioration and (b) how does her department intend to address the specified factors?

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Response

(1) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has been giving focused attention to improving literacy and reading development, and has declared two key outcomes which have an impact on reading, in the current MTEF, as part of the key priority outcomes. These are **Outcome 1**, which is about **improving school readiness for children**; and **Outcome 2**, which is about **getting 10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools to read for meaning**.

Furthermore, the DBE has a National Reading Sector Plan, and Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) have developed their Reading Strategies that target the early grades informed by the National Reading Sector Plan, but taking into account the provinces' contexts. The PEDs' reading strategies outline different activities that are being implemented in schools to improve reading outcomes. To ensure that the reading strategies are implemented across by PEDs, the implementation of the Reading Strategies forms part of the indicators of the DBE's Annual Performance Plan (APP).

There are also various intervention programmes and strategies that are coordinated at the DBE to support the improvement of reading outcomes in the early grades. They include the following:

- Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) for Home and First Additional Languages
- Guidelines on the implementation of ATPs
- National Framework for the Teaching of African Languages in the Foundation Phase
- Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) for Home Languages and English First Additional Language (EFAL)
- Early Grade Reading Study
- Early Grade Reading Assessment
- Workbooks Programme
- Foundation Phase Home Languages literacy lesson plans
- Reading Norms
- Reading Champions Programme
- Read to Lead campaign

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- Comprehension across the curriculum

(2)

a. We have been making steady gains, but the pandemic interrupted our progress. A number of reports detailing the impact COVID-19 has had on educational provision generally, and the literacy development of our children in particular, have been shared. We also acknowledge that the ability to read well, and with comprehension, is a result of a number of factors, and what happens at school level, is but a part of that. The other factors, which are equally important, are linked to the environment outside of school, which is the home and the greater society. With regard to what happens at school level, there are challenges that we are trying to address, and these include the competencies of some of our teachers to teach reading for meaning, particularly in the lower grades, and in the language of the learners; teacher support; access to reading resources, particularly in the home languages of the learners; ensuring that schools have environments conducive to successful reading development; and the general readiness of our children when they start school.

b. The Department will be focusing on strengthening foundational learning. This includes improving early learning, and to do this, we will be providing under-resourced ECDs with a minimum package of educational resources which will comprise resources to stimulate early literacy. The Department has also been reflecting on its current strategy to ensure its agility to respond to challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. To this end, we will be finalising a new and improved Integrated Sector Reading Strategy with a sharpened focus on skilled and versatile teachers, availability of age-appropriate and culturally relevant resources, as well as strengthened involvement of parents and the community. In acknowledging that literacy development is an integrated function that requires coordination, the DBE will be working with PEDs and the sector at large, which includes parents and communities, in finalising the revised strategy.