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24 NOVEMBER 2025

MINISTER GWARUBE WELCOMES THE WRITING OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED BILINGUAL EDUCATION (MTbBE) ASSESSMENTS FOR GRADE 4 LEARNERS

The Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube, welcomes the start of the historic writing of the Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) Grade 4 assessments in Natural Science and Technology today, 24 November 2025, and in Mathematics tomorrow, 25 November 2025.

These assessments mark an important milestone in South Africa's ongoing efforts to strengthen foundational learning, improve learner comprehension and build a more equitable and effective education system. MTbBE – where learners are taught and assessed in their home language alongside English – is intended to improve understanding, deepen concept mastery and support stronger literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The Minister emphasised that this initiative is central to the Department's long-term strategy to reverse learning losses, strengthen reading and mathematics performance, and ensure that every child in South Africa learns in a language they fully understand, particularly in the early grades.

"Mother-tongue instruction is one of the most powerful tools available to improve learning outcomes. When learners understand the language of teaching and learning, they engage more confidently, grasp concepts more deeply, and progress more successfully through the system," said Minister Gwarube.

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The Department of Basic Education has confirmed that this year a total of **11 948 schools** across all nine provinces are implementing Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education. These schools reflect the rich linguistic diversity of South Africa and demonstrate a national commitment to harnessing the power of language for educational success.

According to the Department of Basic Education, the provincial breakdown is as follows:

- **Eastern Cape:** 3 860 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiXhosa and Sesotho
- **KwaZulu-Natal:** 3 558 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu and Sesotho
- **Limpopo:** 2 229 schools offering IsiNdebele, Tshivenda, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Setswana and Xitsonga
- **Mpumalanga:** 768 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati and Xitsonga
- **North West:** 950 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana
- **Free State:** 204 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Xitsonga and Setswana
- **Northern Cape:** 172 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana
- **Western Cape:** 187 schools offering Afrikaans, IsiXhosa and Sesotho
- **Gauteng:** 20 schools offering all 11 official languages: Afrikaans, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga

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The Minister expressed her appreciation to teachers, school managers, provincial departments and parents for their dedication in rolling out MTbBE and supporting learners throughout the year.

“This work is part of our broader commitment to ensuring that every child is supported to read for meaning and to excel in mathematics and science. MTbBE is intended to strengthen the bridge between home and school, and today’s assessments demonstrate the progress we are making in restoring dignity and confidence in our classrooms.”

The Department will continue expanding the MTbBE programme, improving teacher training, and developing high-quality learning and assessment materials in all official languages.

The Minister wishes all Grade 4 learners well as they write today’s and tomorrow’s assessments and encourages them to do their best

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

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