



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION, MRS ANGIE MOTSHEKGA MP, AHEAD OF THE 2021 MATRIC EXAMINATIONS, STARTING THIS MONTH

8 OCTOBER 2021

Good afternoon; and thank you for joining us.

Two days ago, we hosted the 2021 National Teaching Awards, which is our flagship programme within the Teacher Appreciation and Support Programme (TASP). We marked the 21st edition of the National Teaching Awards (NTAs), in appreciating the excellent and selfless work done by our teachers. We had the greatest pleasure of being joined by His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa, who addressed us, encouraged and thanked the teachers, more especially for their continued commitment and dedication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What was fascinating about the 21st version of our NTAs, was the number of young teachers, who were part of the decorated list of national finalists. More encouraging, was to notice the number of young teachers, who are teaching gateway subjects, such as Mathematics, Physical Science and Technology.

Mr Alfred Sokana from Limpopo, and Ms Renate van der Westhuizen from the Western Cape, both won in the Secondary School Teaching and Secondary School Leadership categories respectively. They walked away with cars, which were sponsored by one of our many partners – Via Afrika.

The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Dr Rishi-chand Bhudal from Rose Heights Primary in Chatsworth, KZN. He has served in the Basic Education Sector for 39 years; and 24 of those years, as a school principal. At 62 years, Dr Bhudal has 3 Master's degrees in Education, a post-graduate diploma, and indeed a Doctorate; and he is a registered psychologist. If you read this story, you can see that he has been a truly committed and innovative educator, who went the extra mile in implementing curriculum and extra-curricular initiatives.

Of the 35 teachers, who were finalists at the 21st edition of the NTA, 23 of them, are below the age of 40. This is consistent with the trend showing that younger people are entering the profession, and actually doing great things.

What an event, our 21st National Teaching Awards turned out to be. Our sincere gratitude, must definitely go our teachers. After-all, the October month, is dedicated towards celebrating the professionalism and selflessness of our teachers, and the teaching profession as a whole.

We are very mindful of the devastating effect that COVID-19 has had on our lives. We have lost many of our colleagues, relatives, friends, and loved ones. We salute the fallen teachers who, like soldiers, died with their boots on. The continued death-toll due to COVID-19, is a stark reminder that we must encourage all South Africans to vaccinate, in order to save lives and livelihoods.

On the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative

As you may be aware, the Second Phase of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative has started. Also known, as Basic Education Employment Initiative, the project is currently at a recruitment stage.

Since the opening of the ***sayouth.mobi*** site on 27 September 2021, more than ***five million, five hundred thousand*** (5.5 million)

applications have been received, from more than **three million, nine hundred thousand** (3.9 million) unique applications.

Young people between the ages of 18 and 35, who are currently Neither in Employment, nor Education and Training – the so-called NEETs, or receiving any form of Government social grant, as well as young people with disability and women, are eligible and encouraged to apply.

The Department seeks to provide **two hundred and eighty-seven thousand** (287 000) unemployed young people; **one hundred and ninety-two thousand** (192 000) Education Assistants; and **ninety-five thousand** (95 000) General School Assistants, employment and training opportunities in the Basic Education Sector.

As Government, we are seeking to mitigate the devastating economic challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our young people, will have an opportunity to receive training on a variety of skills, that will equip them for future employment opportunities and job creation.

The application period ends on Sunday, 10 October 2021; and let me emphasise that we do not use the first-come, first-served rule. So, even if you apply today or tomorrow, you still stand a chance of making it. The system experienced some technical glitches, due to the volumes. But these were resolved; and millions of applications were received and captured. The Department will communicate further, once the applications have been processed.

INAUGURATION OF THE UNESCO-SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL COMMISSION (NatCom)

It is my pleasure to announce that we have welcomed the new Commissioners, appointed into the South African National Commission for UNESCO.

UNESCO's mission is *to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through Education, Science, Communication and Information, and Culture. This is done to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law, and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms that are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language, or religion.*

Membership to UNESCO, assists the Republic of South Africa to uphold its vision; and allow our country to contribute to the international community, based on its hard-earned freedom. As an intellectual forum, UNESCO helps eradicate the effects of the long isolation, which the South African academic community and the country, suffered during the apartheid years.

Through access to the different UNESCO institutes, that act as clearing houses of ideas and information, South Africans can access a broad spectrum of information, that would otherwise not be easily accessible.

UNESCO also produces synoptic reports that, while providing scientifically sound information, are accessible to a non-specialist reading public, and useful to decision-makers. The World Reports, are published in the fields of Education, Science, Culture and Communication.

South African intellectuals, also get the opportunity to share their knowledge with the world, by contributing to these reports; or conducting projects and research, the outcomes of which, can be fed to the UNESCO institutes. In this regard, we always take pride in the work done by the Department of Science and Innovation, among other UNESCO competent line function Departments.

As a country involved in the reconstruction and development of all facets of social life, South Africa needs points of reference to guide ethical behaviour. In this regard, the Department of Social Development leads our NatCom for the Social and Human Sciences Sector.

2021 National Senior Certificate Examinations

The main purpose of this media briefing is to provide an update on the readiness for the 2021 National Senior Certificate examinations.

We are left with **eighteen** (18) days before our full-time and part-time candidates sit for the 2021 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. Once again, the 2021 Matric exams, are taking place during the COVID -19 pandemic.

The NSC exams are basically the culmination of 13 years of schooling, with an estimated **two-thousand, five hundred** (2 500) days of teaching and learning. You will recall that the Class of 2021, had to navigate a complex and hazardous terrain to arrive at this final examination.

This is the Grade 11 Class of 2020, that did not complete their curriculum; but through the sheer hard work and dedication of our teachers, they have been able to cover the entire curriculum of 2021, and that they even had enough time to do revisions. The remote learning interventions of the Department and its partners, together with the camps, have assisted in terms of curriculum coverage.

This is the third Matric exam to happen under the COVID-19 environment; and the DBE had to make changes, to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning.

This year, there are **seven hundred and thirty-five thousand, six hundred and seventy-seven** (735 677) full-time candidates. This is an increase by **one hundred and twenty-eight thousand, four hundred and fifty-one** (128 451).

That means that the system needs to ensure that all health and safety protocols are adhered to. We have consulted with provinces to check on their state of readiness; and provinces have confirmed that it is all system go. The officials from the Department, are here and they will

elaborate further on the work done, to prepare the system for the 2021 NSC examinations.

Learner Support Programme

In terms of learner support, the **Woza Matrics Campaign** is available and offers tuition support to Grade 12 learners in ten subjects. The *Woza Matrics Campaign* is a free-to-air television initiative, launched following the academic disruptions caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

Woza Matrics 2021 Catch-Up Campaign, is led through a partnership between the DBE, National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and the Education, Development and Training Practices (ETDP) Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).

The *Woza Matrics Campaign* is a supplementary remote learning support programme, that seeks to benefit our learners to catch-up on curriculum learning, Grade 11 and matric revision, as well as exam preparation. The Campaign is implemented as a growing national network of remote and digital learning partners.

We urge all our learners to take advantage of the learning and teaching support materials as well as the support availed through the Campaign. We also have hundreds of zero-rated platforms on our website.

Quarterly District Directors Deliberations

Yesterday, the Deputy Minister, Director-General, senior officials and I met with the District Directors at our regular quarterly meeting. Yesterday's meeting was also honoured by Chief Directors and Deputy Directors-General from the Provincial Educations Departments, whose line function responsibilities, include District coordination and support.

Among the issues that were deliberated at this important meeting were the following – implementation of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative; the state of readiness to roll-out the 2021 National Senior Certificate Examinations; Monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum at provincial, district and school level; the modernised South African School Administration Management System (SA-SAMS); the implementation of the Quality Management System (QMS); amendments to legislation, regulations and policies; an update on the Vooma Vaccination Campaign; and more critically, an update on unclaimed pensions.

The level of intellectual inputs and synthesis of the matters deliberated, was second to none. Clearly, Basic Education system, is both a system on the rise and a system that is stable. With the cohort of leaders and officials we currently have at the district level, it is clear to us that the social justice principles of ***access, redress, inclusivity, equity, quality and efficiency*** will all be realisable.

On School Infrastructure

We have noted the concerns regarding the pace of the replacement of pit latrines in the country. Great strides are being made in this regard; and as a Department, we have stepped up the monitoring of the delivery of school infrastructure projects.

With regard to the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative, basic pit toilets are scheduled for eradication at a total of 2 825 schools. Of these, sanitation projects at 1 186 schools, have already achieved practical completion; and the balance of the schools are scheduled to achieve practical completion before the end of this year or during the 2022/23 financial year.

On the Vooma Vaccination Campaign

Last weekend, we participated in the Vooma Vaccination Campaign to encourage South Africans to come out in their numbers to get their vaccines. We should not allow complacency to creep in, because we are on adjusted Lockdown Level One. We need to continue to adhere to the health and safety protocols.

We urge all South Africans to join us in the fight against COVID-19, which is still with us. Restrictions might have been eased, but the risk of another wave remains a reality; and we cannot afford to relapse as country. We need to work together to get the country back to normal. So please go get vaccinated, if you have not already done so.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to urge all South Africans to play a direct role in rebooting the Basic Education system. On a daily basis, we are seeing improvements in the rates of COVID-19 related infections and deaths. Levels of normalcy are gradually being reached; but we must still remain vigilant in whatever we do. Adherence to COVID19 protocols is not negotiable.

In rebooting the system, we must ensure that the basics are addressed. Our school communities must be at school on time, ready to teach and learn. Our schools must be safe havens for learning and teaching again. Learners in the Foundation and Senior Phases, must be able to read with meaning.

In rebooting the system, we must jointly find strategies to decisively deal with most of our perennial challenges. All of us, including community members, must commit to accelerate the rationalisation and closure of small and unviable schools. We must accelerate the eradication of unsafe and unviable sanitation facilities. Working together with business, NGOs, communities of trust, communities,

we can ensure that schools, which were declared by the Ruling Party of a societal matter, that all of us are playing our pivotal and active roles in rebooting the Basic Education System.

During the 2021 NSC examinations, communities are encouraged to report COVID-19 cases through the WhatsApp Teacher Connect platform. The platform has assisted a lot during marking; and it provided much-needed information to help create a safe environment for everybody involved. The number is 060 060 33 33. Simply type CONNECT, and take it from there. It is a user-friendly platform; please use it.

May I invite Ms Priscilla Ogunbanjo to present on the roll-out of the 2021 NSC examinations. She will be followed by Ms Cheryl Weston, who will present on curriculum coverage.

I thank you

Link to 2021 NSC Examination State of Readiness Presentation

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Media/Preess%20Releases/State%20of%20Exam%20System%20Readiness%20NSC%202021.pdf>