



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, during the Minister's Meeting with District Directors, held in Pretoria

08 June 2023

Programme Director, Deputy Minister, Dr Makgabo Mhaule;

Acting Director-General, Dr Granville Whittle;

Deputy Director-Generals and Chief Directors from the Provinces and the DBE; and District Directors,

Good morning, Sanibonani, Ndi Matsheloni, Dumelang, Molweni, Lotshani,

I am truly delighted to stand before you in person today after years of only hearing voices through virtual platforms.

Your presence has been sorely missed at the Department of Basic Education.

Allow me to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you here in the somewhat chilly Gauteng province.

I take this moment to express my utmost pride in your resilience and unwavering support.

Together, we have faced numerous challenges head-on: These are:

- The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic,
- Overcrowding in schools due to the implementation of COVID protocols,
- The learning losses experienced by our learners,
- The intricate ECD Function Shift—the list is endless!

Recently, we celebrated our teachers as the backbone of the education system through the SACE Teachers' Conference held in April 2023.

During this event, teachers astounded us with their innovative solutions to manage the challenges we faced.

Their dedication remains pivotal in rebuilding our education system.

As we implement the Learning Recovery Programme, Reading Programme, ECD, and other key areas, our teachers continue to serve as the backbone of our implementation strategy.

We must prioritize their professional development, create competitive working conditions, and provide fair salaries to ensure their effectiveness.

Let us also recognize the remarkable efforts of our district officials.

In this regard, I assure you that the National Education Excellence Awards have been scheduled for our next meeting.

We acknowledge that school performance is directly linked to the support received from district offices.

Programme director, Early Childhood Development (ECD) has become a paramount priority in our education system.

We have inherited a significant responsibility, with 42,420 Early Learning Programmes and approximately 1.6 million children (according to the ECD Census, 2021) under our care.

However, the 2022 Thrive by Five Index indicates that the quality of ECD provision requires attention.

Shockingly, 65% of 4-5-year-olds have not met the early learning and physical growth standards.

In our efforts to improve the delivery of ECD, we have identified five priorities:

- Implementing curriculum-based early learning through a strengthened National Curriculum Framework;
- Providing quality developmental programs for all children from birth to 5 years of age;
- Offering comprehensive training for all those working within the ECD sector;

- Enhancing coordination and collaboration with other government departments.

Adequate funding is crucial to achieving our goals, and the Public Expenditure and Instructional Review have made positive recommendations for increased ECD funding.

Investing significantly in our children and the future of our nation is our top priority.

The recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) has dampened our excitement following the positive results of the 2022 NSC, TIMSS, and SEACMEQ assessments, which showcased our rising education system.

However, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing quality basic education for all South African learners.

In addition to workbooks and a strengthened CAPS curriculum, we have supplied additional reading materials.

The Reading Champions, part of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI), have provided invaluable support at the school level.

Collaboration with universities has been a consistent approach, with the University of Johannesburg training subject advisors and teachers in reading skills for African languages.

Our Early Grade Reading Programme and the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme continue to expand and provide crucial support for reading skills.

We are in the final stages of developing the revised National Reading Plan, which will ensure the provision of a minimum Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) package to support reading instruction.

We aim to address reading challenges in Home Language (HL) and First Additional Languages from an early age, as the repercussions of inadequate reading skills can lead to students struggling in Grade 12 and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must never forget that our schools operate within communities, and the functionality of these communities directly affects the smooth functioning of our schools.

I implore you to fully participate in the District Development Model (DDM), which will enhance service delivery and improve intergovernmental relations in planning, budgeting, and implementation.

By working closely with other government departments, such as the Department of Health, we can ensure that the health and well-being of our learners and ourselves meet the required standards.

It is crucial to note that one's performance is closely linked to one's health.

The Department of Health is closely monitoring the spread of cholera in the country.

As educators, we must remain vigilant, considering the large number of learners within our schools and the potential implications of any such spread on our education system.

I urge all of you to actively engage in the discussions during the presentations and to share your valuable experiences from the front lines of the education system.

Today's physical gathering marks just the beginning of our continued collaboration and progress.

Once again, I extend my deepest gratitude to each of you for being present here today.

Together, we will overcome challenges and ensure quality basic education for all our learners.

I thank you, Ngiyabonga, Hakhensa!