



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Opening Remarks by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, MP, at the Meeting with District Directors, held virtually**

**16 March 2022**

Programme Director

Deputy Minister of Basic Education

Director-General

DDGs

District Directors

Chief Directors

Officials and Staff

It is with pleasure that I once again address you; although it's still virtual, I do hope that soon we will meet in person.

As a sector, we are indebted to you for holding the fort under highly challenging conditions in the past two years.

Education district offices have a pivotal role in ensuring that all learners have access to basic education of progressively high quality in a safe and conducive learning environment.

District directors are the crucial link between various parts of the basic education ecosystem.

Despite the Covid-19 induced challenges, the sector held credible National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations.

The system showed resilience as we successfully presented one of the largest cohorts to sit for the NSC examinations.

All related exam processes, including administration and marking, were successfully adjusted to accommodate the Covid-19 protocols.

We are pleased with the results of the Class of 2021, who performed remarkably well despite being the most affected by the intermittent Covid-19 closures.

Equally pleasing is that 73 out of the 75 districts attained a pass rate above 60%, 37 districts achieved between 70 and 79% and 26 districts performed above 80%.

Despite all the challenges that manifest, we have moved from a pass rate of 60% in 2009 to 76.4% in 2021 (inclusive of progressed learners).

I think you really need to applaud yourselves for such achievement!

To improve the quality of the NSC and career pathing, we are introducing the General Education Certificate (GEC).

I must emphasise that this is not an exit certificate but a transitional one allowing learners to choose their career pathways.

We are piloting a new certificate for 300 schools in 2022 and expect full implementation by 2024.

We must work without ceasing to support learners who do not obtain their matric certificate the first time around.

I implore all provinces and districts to activate and support learners enrolled in the Second Chance Matric Programme.

We must make passing matric a national endeavour to improve throughout and help young people to reach their full potential.

Programme director, I would like to implore you to assist learners eligible for social grants to access them.

There is evidence that the absence of this critical support (child support grant) affects their academic achievement.

As you know, we have issued instructions for all learners to return to full-time daily attendance.

The National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) has agreed to remove social distancing measures in all schools.

I am pleased to announce that in **17,374** ordinary public schools (**98.5%**) and **4,387** special public schools (**99.8%**), learners return to daily attendance as of the 07th of February 2022.

Impressively in the Free State and Limpopo, all ordinary public schools returned to daily attendance as required.

Even more gratifying is that all special schools returned to daily attendance as required in six provinces (Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Western Cape).

There were no significant differences in Quantile 1, 2, 3 and 5 schools regarding the number of schools that could not return to daily attendance.

Furthermore, it is encouraging that only 12 rural/farm secondary schools cannot return to daily attendance.

Over 90% of our teachers are back at school since the return of all learners to full-time attendance. This figure pertains to the first day of daily attendance.

Our greatest challenge in the sector remains the school infrastructure.

Although we have systemic school infrastructure challenges, very few schools have reported difficulties since the instruction to return to daily full-time attendance.

Nonetheless, some provinces have only utilised 60% of their infrastructure budget by the end of February 2022.

We have identified the following challenges:

We need reliable data on the current state of school infrastructure

We need to eradicate infrastructure backlogs relating to inappropriate structures, sanitation and water supply

We need to eradicate pit latrine toilets.

We need to repair schools damaged by storms immediately.

Yet, the current implementation mechanism is not delivering the results we require.

We need to consider an alternative approach to the delivery of school infrastructure.

The current procurement process is prolonged and cumbersome.

We are indebted to the corporate sector players such as AVBOB, ASSUPOL and others who are assisting us in eradicating inappropriate school infrastructure such as toilets.

We are very proud and appreciative of the support we receive from the corporate sector for many of our programmes, including the National Teaching Awards, the National Education Excellence Awards, and others.

Indeed, we need to intensify our efforts to address the learning losses experienced due to the pandemic.

We have partnered with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), and we have together already crafted the Covid-19 recovery plan.

Programme director; I urge you to pay attention to vulnerable learners.

As the microcosm of society, our schools are plagued by social ills, including violence, bullying, and sexual abuse, among others.

I urge all of us to heighten the implementation of the National School Safety Framework.

The Safety Framework is supported by the problem-specific protocols, such as:

- Elimination of Unfair Discrimination in Schools;
- Protocol to Deal with Incidences of Corporal Punishment in Schools; and
- Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools.

We have already gazetted the revised National Policy on preventing and managing Learner Pregnancy in Schools.

This follows unacceptable high learner pregnancy numbers reported during the Covid-19 lockdown.

This can easily be attributed to school closures for extended periods.

I trust that the implementation of this Policy will assist in addressing the scourge of early and unintended pregnancies amongst the learner population.

We must do more for the girl child.

We also plan to strengthen Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) uptake through the Life Orientation subject.

Programme director, there's light at the end of the tunnel as far as the new history curriculum is concerned.

As advised by the History Ministerial Task Team, we are on the cusp of finalising the new History curriculum.

We have completed new History curriculum topics for the InterSen phase, including learners in Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Plans are afoot to complete the new History curriculum topics for Grades 10 – 12 later this year.

Programme director, I am happy to report that progress has been registered on the Early Childhood and Development (ECD) function shift from the Department of Social Development to Basic Education.

Today, I am happy to report that the relaunch of a much improved, reimagined and integrated ECD sector will be unveiled on the 01<sup>st</sup> of April 2022.

In conclusion, Covid-19 remains with us.

We have to do everything in our power to stay safe.

I urge all teachers and qualifying learners to vaccinate.

South Africa has enough Covid-19 vaccines to vaccinate two-thirds of the adult population.

Let's choose life.

#I choose vaccination.