



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Keynote Address by the Basic Education Minister Mrs Angie Motshekga at the National Inclusive Education Summit held at Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre**

**22 November 2021**

Programme Director

Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhaule

MECs for Education

Director-General, Mr HM Mveli

All Deputy Directors-General present

Heads of Provincial Education Departments

Senior Officials from National and Provincial Departments

Leaders and representatives of disability organisations

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to officially open this National Inclusive Education Summit, which seeks to reposition inclusive education as a mechanism towards education for all.

Programme Director, I must thank the Presidential Working Group on Disability, especially the workstream on Inclusive Education, for identifying the need to hold this summit.

The purpose of the summit is two-fold: i) we want to acknowledge and appreciate the progress made and identify gaps that exist in the implementation of inclusive education policy;

And ii) identify ways of addressing the gaps to take inclusive education to the next level.

Therefore, tomorrow, we must walk away with a clear map of how to consolidate our gains and strengthen the work so that no child is indeed left behind.

Our commitment as Government to inclusive education is derived from the *Education White Paper 6*.

Today, I intend to give a truncated progress report of the sector since 2001 to fulfil the Education White Paper 6 directives.

The White Paper 6 calls upon us to provide quality education and support to all children with disabilities.

In a nutshell, the promise is to leave no child behind.

Furthermore, we are bound by Section 29 of the Constitution that declares that everyone has a right to basic education, including adult basic education.

Here, we derive the motto, leaving no child behind, because the constitution doesn't say we must provide basic education for only a specific class of learners or learners with a particular ability spectrum, or whatsoever.

The keyword here is to provide basic education for ALL.

The White Paper gave us 20 years horizon to turn the fortunes of the inclusive education sector.

I am happy to report that much progress has been registered, but more effort is still required to leapfrog to the next level.

The White Paper enjoined us to conduct a nationwide advocacy campaign to popularise the prescripts of the policy.

Secondly, it directed us to mobilise out-of-school children and youth of school-going age to take up their right to basic education.

I am happy to report that we did the advocacy work as required, assisted by a range of industry bodies and civil society organisations, for which we thank you.

As a testament to our efforts to date, 137 332 and 121 461 learners, compared to 64 000 and 77 000 learners in 2002, are enrolled in special and ordinary schools, respectively.

We have dedicated capacity in all nine Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) to manage inclusive education guided by Basic Education experts based in Pretoria.

For instance, we have established District-Based Support Teams and School-Based Support Teams to coordinate inclusive education support services for teachers and learners.

As a collective, these professionals advance the ideal of inclusive education, share best practices and craft and monitor implementation plans for the sector.

To take inclusive education to the next level, in 2014, we finalised a policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS).

The aim of the policy is to identify early signs of barriers to learning.

To date, 6 772 Grade Practitioners, 172 164 teachers and 10 010 officials have been oriented on the crux of the Policy on Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

Recently, the focus has shifted towards implementing Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support.

For instance, during 2020/21, 22 074 Individual Support Plans (ISP) were developed to address learners' educational needs at the school level.

We had to convert and designate at least 500 public ordinary primary schools as full-service schools in terms of the policy.

However, by the end of 2018, we had already designated 848 full-service schools, not just in 30 education districts required in the White Paper 6, but in all education districts.

It is very rare in government work to say the following, as a sector, we exceeded the target of designating 500 schools as full-service ones by 348.

We had to designate or convert several special schools into resource centres in thirty designated districts as per the directives of the White Paper.

I am happy to report that to date, 373 out of 435 special schools serve as resource centres, providing outreach services to full-service and ordinary schools.

To ensure excellent quality throughout the sector, we have developed *Standard Operating Procedures for the Designation, Conversion and Resourcing of Full-Service Schools* as per the Auditor-General's recommendations.

Programme Director, we have also turned the corner regarding access to education for Learners with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability (LSPID).

As part of our work of ensuring access to education for Learners with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability, 500 special care centres have been audited.

We have developed and field-tested the Learning Programme for this category of learners.

So far, 280 transversal itinerant team members have been trained to deliver the Learning Programme.

We have at least 3 423 learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities who now utilise the Learning Programme and access therapeutic services.

Programme director, on diversification of curriculum offerings to cater to diverse educational needs, we have made great strides.

We now offer the South African Sign Language (SASL) as a matric subject.

For instance, 44 learners in eight of the 17 schools for the Deaf that offer Grade 12 wrote the first National Senior Certificate (NCS) examination in SASL Home Language in 2018.

In 2019, the number increased to 101 learners in 15 schools wrote the National Senior Certificate examination.

For 2020, 140 candidates from five provinces, including Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape, will write the National Senior Certificate examination.

Programme director on teacher provisioning and development for inclusive education is also picking up speed.

In 2020, 62 student teachers were funded through the Funza Lushaka Bursary to specialise in the South African Sign Language, Braille and neurodevelopmental needs.

We are also involved in the massive augmentative training scheme to prepare teachers as crucial agents of inclusive education.

Together with our partners, Unisa, British Council and MIET AFRICA, we launched the Teaching for All: Mainstreaming Inclusive Education in South Africa initiative.

The Teaching for All intervention aims to strengthen the capacity of pre-service and in-service teachers to recognise and respond effectively to the educational needs of children, thereby contributing to a more inclusive education system.

The programme is being piloted in Western Cape.

Meanwhile, we continuously offer specialised training to our teachers to meet the needs of specific disabilities such as Braille, South African Sign Language, Autism and other inclusive educational programmes.

Programme director, I am happy to report that 2 295 teachers have been trained in Braille, 2 714 on South African Sign Language, and 4 724 have received training on Autism.

We have also provided inclusive education training programmes to some 35 354 teachers in the sector.

I am happy to say in consultation with the industry experts, the Independent Authority of South Africa (ICASA) and all relevant, inclusive education stakeholders, we have already developed a comprehensive ICTs Resource Model for Special Needs Schools.

Our whole implementation strategy includes:

- (1) ICT Guidelines for Schools;
- (2) Basic ICT package;
- (3) Assistive technologies basket;
- (4) Special Needs School Assessment form; and
- (5) Process Map.



It is pleasing to note that all Network Operators have, through the Universal Service and Access Obligations (USAO) project, committed to rolling out ICTs to all 447 Special Schools allocated to them with the fit for purpose ICT equipment.

This project began in 2019.

In our view, the ICTs are the real game-changer, not just to narrow the proverbial 'digital divide' but 'to enable the disabled.'

Only ICTs can break the barriers of learners with disabilities by providing them with a voice, independence and autonomy.

I am encouraged that our telecommunications giants (network operators) are again playing a more meaningful role in the social well-being of the poor, the marginalised and disabled.

It's time, as a country, that we pulled together again.

South Africans deserve no less.

In conclusion, at the outset of Covid-19, we developed Guidelines for Healthcare and Social Service Professionals in the Department of Basic Education on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak in South Africa.

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide guidance on these professionals' roles and responsibilities in public ordinary, special schools and special care centres during COVID-19.

Programme Director, in conclusion, we must be mindful that an inclusive, just, and fair society can only be achieved through collective action.

Indeed, we are in this together.

I pass my gratitude to all stakeholders in the inclusive education sector for walking the talk with us in a national cause to provide basic education for all.

I implore summit participants to give us a roadmap for the next 20 years, thus repositioning inclusive education as a mechanism towards education for all.

I thank you.