



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address by the Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga at the Virtual Lunch of the Primestars #StandingWithTheClassOf2021

19 August 2021

It is indeed my singular honour and privilege to be here today for the official launch of eduCate #StandingWithTheClassOf2021 programme.

This is an innovative collaboration between our Government, Corporate SA and civil society.

We are indebted to Primestars and YouthStart Foundation NPC for the programme's design, management, and roll-out.

This programme builds on last year's successful #SavingTheClassOf2020 Matric Math & Science Revision programme, of which Primestars also implemented.

The focus on mathematics and science is no fluke.

We are enjoined by the *National Development Plan* (NDP) to set our sights on improved learner outcomes in the gateway subjects such as mathematics and science.

The NDP sets goals for improving the quality of teaching in schools, colleges and universities to ensure that our young people obtain the best education possible.

Thanks to the #SavingTheClassOf2020 Matric Math & Science Revision programme, over 20 000 matriculants from under-resourced communities across SA benefitted from the much-needed academic support.

The 2020 impact assessment report demonstrated improvement in the marks of participating learners, and they improved approximately by 12 percentage points better.

Programme Director; let put the importance of this programme in context.

Although not as bad as last year, the pandemic has disrupted schooling hence the need for innovative support platforms like this one we are launching today.

It is no exaggeration to state that the year 2020 was the perfect annus horribilis.

Let's avoid the worst of the 2020 year.

Instead, let's rebuild, innovate and refocus.

The Covid-19 global health emergency tests the resilience of all of us as a community of nations.

Just a few weeks back, the coronavirus pandemic threatened to overwhelm our health system.

Sadly the mortality numbers keep growing.

Let's vaccinate to save lives.

As a country, we have to emerge from this crisis stronger and united.

We have to be steadfast in our battle against illiteracy, innumeracy, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The battle on all fronts is far from over.

Programme Director; due to the success of the 2020 cooperation and stellar performance of our learners, the trio partnership is back—bigger and better.

The new hashtag campaign is #StandingWithTheClassOf2021.

We have also increased innovation in terms of the implementation model.

In 2021, the free Matric Math & Science content (video and textbooks) will be made available in cinema, at selected rural schools, and via WhatsApp.

Later in the year, the curriculum content will also be available on the new Primestars Digital platform and television.

These platforms represent our provision of quality education “from the BIG screen to ALL screens”.

Programme Director; we have had to grapple with the disparities across schools on performance of learners in Physical Sciences and Mathematics over the years.

The disparities are primarily due to the historical legacy of the underfunding of the basic education sector, which we are confronting every day.

Resources also play a significant role in schools that were historically not designed to teach Physical Sciences and Mathematics.

A large chunk of the budget has also gone to refurbishing, building and resourcing schools that offer these subjects.

Socio-economic issues present in communities where such learners come from also present new learning barriers for a large percentage of learners in such schools.

They range from child-headed households due to the scourge of HIV and Aids, the high burden of diseases, chronic unemployment and poor infrastructure, to name but a few.

We also have a real danger posed by gangsterism, bullying, drug prevalence and abuse, and violence, amongst others.

It doesn't help that these learners in vulnerable communities also have to contend with service delivery protests, which often turn violent.

Sadly, we have also observed that the leaders of these protests prevent learners from attending schools.

Sometimes schools are vandalised, and violence is often visited on those attempting to protect these facilities.

This is the reality of public schooling in our country. Yet, we are not about to throw in the towel.

Instead, we must rebuild, innovate and soldier on.

In you, we have the excellent ambassadors of public schooling.

The 2021 academic year has been the second most challenging one due to the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yet, all our teachers, non-teaching staff, civil society and Corporate SA continue to find new frontiers of cooperation and innovation.

I am confident that by working together yet again, we can perform a better rescue mission for the Class of 2021.

This magnanimous act seeks to save a whole generation of learners from possible long-term cognitive deficiency occasioned by the proverbial “9 lost months” of learning and teaching that we experienced in 2020.

For this, I send my gratitude to all of you.

We also mourn, as we have lost some of our teachers, learners and support staff due to Covid-19.

In their memory, we commit to rebuild, innovate and refocus.

After the sector’s successful vaccination programme, we hope to have a better second half of the year and possibly survive the Covid-19’s fourth wave.

I would love to commend the vaccinators and applaud all our staff members, especially teachers who took the jab.

We have saluted the Class of 2020 for bravely and tenacity in the wake of the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic’s devastation.

We now urge the Class of 2021 to step up to the plate and be counted.

No one said it's going to be easy.

No one said you're alone. We as a country are behind you all the way.

Let's rebuild, innovate and refocus.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Primestars for the innovative programme they have developed for the learners of South Africa.

All social partners have a role to play in fulfilling the Freedom Charter's clarion call that: "The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be opened!"

By your concomitant action today, you are enabling us to provide quality public schooling in our lifetime.

A lot of work is currently in progress to improve learner outcomes in high order subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science.

We have decided that we will accelerate this work through the ICT roll-out and other interventions, of which the details will be made public in the next year's budget speech.

I thank you.