

Speech to be delivered by the MEC for Education at occasion of the meeting with Religious Leaders

Sanibonani.

Complements of the new season.

I am very grateful to everyone present today, I appreciate that you took time out of your busy schedules and honored the call to meet with the Department. Your presence ladies and gentlemen, gives me hope and a sense of relief that we are still working together in the quest to enrich the lives of our communities.

Last year, we held a similar gathering, where we had requested all religious fraternities to pray and meditate towards the good of our children who were heading for their matric exams. We departed from that meeting in high spirits as we were certain that we had succeeded in ensuring that all spiritual aspects of the examination process were put in place. We found courage because Matthew 21 verse 22 states that ***“and whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive”***.

Ladies and gentlemen, your noble wishes and devotion were received with abundant inclination and have certainly contributed in the 2013 examination outcomes.

The province has once again achieved an incident free examination. It is through your good thoughts and dedication that we were able to obtain such credible accolades as a province. We thank you.

Allow me to take this very opportunity and express my gratitude towards the Moral Regeneration Movement for taking stock in matters of education. Your steadfast participation has evidently steadily decreased concerns of moral decay in our youth, more especially from those that are still attached to our schools, as we are still afforded the chance to act as potters and shape their young lives with positive influences.

The Department cannot even begin to express the appreciation we have for the support we receive from the Movement, your good office constantly reminds us of our responsibilities and the importance of serving the province in a loyal and patriotic manner.

I humbly request the house to let me announce that Mpumalanga province received an astonishing **77.6%** pass rate for the year 2013. The class of 2013 has indeed made us extremely proud.

We begin the year with an even greater drive to achieve more in the present year as we did not reach our targeted **10%** improvement mark which was set in January 2013.

This is the same drive that will unquestionably push each and everyone of us to commit and devote more effort in the mission to uphold the standard of our education systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen in 2012, the Department declared that there would be no school in the Mpumalanga Province that was to obtain results below **50%**, the house should note that at the time there were **89** schools that fell within this category.

I am pleased to announce that **54** schools were able to act in accordance to the call and only **35** schools are still to rise to the occasion.

This year, we urged that all schools achieve no less than a **60%** pass rate and have given schools that achieved less than a **50%** last year an ultimatum, but we are also prepared to offer the necessary support that the schools deserve in order to improve their marks.

We are gathered here as a people who want the best for our youth, I plead with all religious leaders to also offer spiritual assistance and counselling to these schools in order for the principals and educators to have their minds at peace as they soldier on to improve their current state of results.

We are proud of our four districts as they have immensely improved their pass rates. All four districts registered a **10%** improvement. We however have to single out Ehlanzeni District as it recorded the highest pass rate, obtaining **82.8%**.

In the **18** Provincial Municipalities, Nkomazi Municipality is the top municipality after obtaining **85.6%**

We also congratulate the **25** schools that obtained **100%**, and acknowledge Hoëskool for being declared the best school in the province for the second consecutive year.

The office also congratulates the **50 053** learners who passed the 2013 Grade 12 examination, the learners who made it to the provincial Top 10, and also acknowledge the overall best learner in the province, **Mistry Bhavika Sureshkumar**, from Hoëskool Hoogehout.

COMMUNITIES TO REGISTER TO VOTE

The year 2014 is a very significant year as we celebrate 20 years of our democracy. We are given another chance to vote and secure our future.

We ask that all religious leaders encourage community members to register to vote in the upcoming elections. Let us remind our communities that their future it's in their hands.

CONCLUSION

Our learners are faced with different challenges that seek for our attention. In some circumstances, learners are unable to express themselves as they are not aware of where to seek for help. I therefore appeal to everyone in the house to make themselves available and visible in our different communities.

Let us be a safe haven for those that are in need by offering counselling and spiritual knowledge to the people of Mpumalanga.

Ngiyabonga.