

**Keynote Address delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs.  
Reginah Mhaule at the occasion of the Meeting with Primary  
School Principals at Pienaars Dam on 03 February 2014.**

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Programme Director;

Head of Department; Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane

Members of Senior Management

Principals

Officials from the Department

Greetings are always in order.

Compliments of the new year to all of you as we meet for the first time in 2014. Let me take this time to extend our profound appreciation to you for gracing this meeting. Allow me to first acknowledge our higher being for affording us this opportunity to meet here today. Let me also take this moment and thank each and everyone of you present, your presence reassures me that we are a team that is still prepared to work together and achieve great strides in the education sector.

It is of importance that we note that for every structure to be concrete and not be moved by unfriendly winds and rain, it must be built on a strong foundation and not sinking sands. This theory is indeed one that we are to adhere to, as we assist our learners to progress steadily to other learning phases in school.

## **2013 MATRIC RESULTS**

We meet at a time when the Province is oozing with confidence as we have seen unprecedented improvement following the 2013 Grade 12 results. We are proud of the work that our teachers are doing at a classroom level as well as the contributions of our stakeholders.

The class of 2013 has indeed made us extremely proud. Our province received an astonishing **77.6%** pass rate for the year 2013. It is therefore fitting that I thank each one of you for preparing these learners from an early age so that they are able to conquer their first step to a bright future.

It is your good selves' ladies and gentlemen that receive these young minds and take the role of a potter to mould them to the young independent thinkers that will play a vital role in the growth of our country. We sincerely thank you for your hard work.

## **ANA EXAMINATIONS**

Last year we saw a total number of 586 339 (**Five Hundred and Eighty Six Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty Nine**) Grades 1 to 6 and 9 learners in the province sitting for their ANA examinations according to a nationally-set timetable; this standardized exercise is one that allows us to verify that every learner is developing the language and mathematical skills appropriate for the grade.

It is through this endeavor that we also ensure that corrective measures are implemented in order to improve the standard of numeracy and literacy at primary level.

As we are all aware, marking of all ANA tests are done by teachers, guided by the memoranda provided by the Department of Basic Education. In addition, the Department of Basic Education and Provinces conduct centralised moderation of samples of marked scripts from schools to verify the quality of marking at school level.

It is of great concern to the Department that our learners are struggling in the ANA tests but perform better at the internally set and marked tests administered by schools. This sends one message to us and that is the locally administered tests seem to be of lower quality and standard as the performance does not correlate with the ANA test performance.

In Grade 1 Mathematics we have noted a decline in performance as a Province from 65.9% in 2012 to 56.2% in 2013, in Grade 1 language we improved from 54.1% in 2012 to 57.1% in 2013. In grade 3 Mathematics, we also noted an improvement from 35.6% to 47.8% putting Mpumalanga second last in performance. My intention is not to emit statistics as I am quite aware of the fact that this report was circulated to schools and is freely available on the DBE website for your perusal.

At the occasion of the delivery of the 2011 Policy and Budget Speech on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, I pronounced that the Department is targeting to attain **60%** of learners performing at acceptable levels in Grades **3, 6 and 9** in Literacy and Numeracy by 2014.

By the looks of things we are no near that target and at some instances it seem we are regressing as we are at 47% for Grade 3 Languages and 33.6% for Grade 6 Mathematics.

This is a worrying trend and I thus implore you to look into a remedy of this situation so that we can move forward together as a province to the advantage of our learners and province.

Let me take you into confidence and inform you that we have already met with secondary school principals to discuss matters of importance to improve on the 77.6 % pass rate. As we know that the foundation of all learning takes place at the primary school level, we have seen it necessary as a department to create some time and to have a conversation with you, our primary school principals.

## **SCHOOL BUSES**

In his message to the people of South Africa and the world on the ANC manifesto, President Jacob Zuma said;

### **Open Quote**

*"Working together, we have defended and consolidated the social*

*gains achieved since 1994, despite the negative global economic situation. More of our people have been lifted out of extreme poverty; we have created more jobs than before; expanded social grants, housing and basic services to our people; and further improved access to better education and health care.*

*Our journey continues.*

*Our struggle has now reached the second phase, in which we will implement radical socio-economic transformation to meaningfully address poverty, unemployment and inequality."*

**Close quote.**

We are thus mandated to take care of the needs of our schools and learners so as to enhance teaching and learning to meet the requirements of the present era. As a Department we intend to banish inequality to the books of history especially with regards to learners with special educational needs. We want to be as inclusive as possible when it comes to infrastructural requirements even on matters of movable property.

Our goal is to ensure that learners with special educational needs are not left behind and that they should be integrated into the mainstream where possible. We are quite aware of the restrictions and limitations that our schools are faced with in this regard, hence we have schools that are specialising and focusing on dispensing special needs education.

I thus want all our principals to be aware of this situation so that you may be able to take good care of our learners with special needs and be able to refer them to the right institutions to get an education appropriate to their needs.

On that very note, we are here to handover special buses to our special schools. **!!!!Please note: The Number of buses and features are left out!!!!!!!!!!!!**

### **Enabling Factors**

Mpumalanga Province has an acceptable teacher-pupil ratio of **1:29**, classroom pupil ratio stands at **1:40**, **98%** of principals' posts filled and processes are ongoing to ensure that all schools' principal posts are filled.

The qualifications, age and state of health of our teachers is favorably good and almost all learners attend school every day.

**65 414** learners are transported daily and **859 416** learners in **1 633** public schools receive School Nutrition daily.

The Department has every month honored its obligations with regards to the remuneration for Principals, Senior Management Teams and Educators.

Training is rendered by the Department on Management and Leadership in policy implementation, Maths, Science and Technology Programmes and so on.

There are endeavours to improve the provision of school infrastructure and comparatively speaking our Province is doing very well.

All these and other programmes should ordinarily translate to better results or outstanding performance.

It is therefore imperative that we must begin to ask ourselves serious questions on why are developments in this way?

## **CONCLUSION**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the importance of primary schooling cannot be over-emphasised as it is all clear to all of us that a shaky foundation at that level would be detriment to the whole education system. I just want to bring to your attention the appreciation that we have for the marvelous work that you do as you initiate our children to teaching and learning and at the same time weaning them of illiteracy.

As primary school principals we need to take cognisance of the value that we play in the education value chain, hence our attention should be on the Annual National Assessment and the performance of the Province in that regard.

We have pronounced publicly that we will not rest until learner performance in the Province reaches acceptable levels.

We will continue to call consultative meetings, summits, conferences and izindaba until we attain our objectives of ensuring that all learners who enter our system make the grade.

Thank you.