

**Speech delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule at the occasion of the official handover of Thanduxolo Specialized School on 18 March 2014.**

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Programme Director

Executive Mayor of Emalahleni Municipality:

MEC for Public Works and Transport: Ms. Dikeledi Mahlangu

Head of Department: Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane

Senior Managers

Circuit Manager

Principal of Thanduxolo Specialized School

Members of the School Governing Bodies

Political Structures present

Principals

Educators

Members of the Media

Learners

**Sanibonani,**

Allow me to take this time and extend warm greetings from the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, it is indeed a great pleasure that we are gathered here today on the grounds of Thanduxolo Special School.

It is only fitting that I acknowledge and express my greatest appreciation to Ms. Dikeledi Mahlangu, MEC for Public Works and Transport for her involvement in ensuring that the building of the school remained a primary goal.

We truly appreciate your dedication in seeing through that your team always remained motivated in playing a vital role in the construction of the school that stands before us.

Siyabonga Kakhulu!

As I stand before you today, I am filled with great emotion. These emotions are brought about the realization that our presence today signifies that for the past two **(2)** decades we still are a government that is constantly working towards improving the lives our people.

In the past 20 years we have seen ordinary South Africans afforded a better life and equal opportunities regardless of their race, creed or gender.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen is indeed a good story to tell. It is a tale that will remain in the books of history, and will always bring a smile to the descendants of this country.

### **Importance of Special Schools**

Allow me to take the time and remind everyone of the words of the former President, Nelson Mandela when he stated that ***“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”***.

These words must remind us that every South African child is entitled to education in our lifetime. We owe it to our children to always love, care and protect them regardless of the challenges they may be facing.

Over the past years we have continuously encouraged a numerous number of parents with children with special needs to enroll them to schools so that they may interact with their peers and become part of a society and not be kept in isolation.

Thanduxolo is one of the **18 special schools** in the province. This school serves as a safe ground for children with special needs. It offers a curriculum that aims to empower its learners by developing their individual strengths and enabling them to participate critically in the learning process, and not only focusing on their shortcomings.

It is important to note that while special schools provide critical education services to learners who require intense levels of support, they also accommodate learners who require much less support and should ideally be in mainstream schools.

Special schools however ensure that learners who require intense levels of support receive these services since mainstream schools are unable to provide for them.

### **Thanduxolo Special School**

Thanduxolo Special School has the enrolment of **305** learners who are between the ages of seven (**07**) and 21 years. The school comprises of learners from Kwaguga, Mhluzi, Ogies-Phola, Klarinet and the surrounding mine villages within the Emalahleni Municipality.

The skills offered at the school include self-care, socialization, perceptual motor development , functional scholastic, physical education and sports, work skills, job preparations programmes such as woodwork, painting, renovations, needle work, mesh –wire making just to mention a few.

Learners are divided into the phases according to their age and abilities.

The schools new building consist of **10** classrooms, four (**4**) workshops, an administration block, two (**2**) garages and a sport ground.

These new infrastructural features must be a form of encouragement to all parents of children with special needs; it must stand as evidence that their children have a place in society and should not be excluded from the community at large.

The school aims to fight stereotypical behavior that learners who experience barriers to learning must drop out and become idle in their homes. Thanduxolo Special School recognizes and accommodates the diverse range of all learning needs and offers the necessary support.

We can assure everyone present today that your children are in good hands; our educators are well trained and have the necessary skills to attend to the needs of their learners.

This however, does not imply that the school does not need the support of the community. I urge all parents to be involved in the development of their children. We encourage parents to work together with the school so that we can yield better results in shaping the lives of these young people.

Thanduxolo ladies and gentlemen belongs to the community; let it be the pride of the community of Emalahleni.

The school today is in a good physical state, I would like to take the time to encourage everyone to take care of the school and always insist in making sure that it remains a gem of the community.

Ladies and Gentlemen allow me to take this opportunity and thank all individuals and organizations that have played a massive role in the construction of the school.

We appreciate all the hardwork and efforts in bettering the lives of the African child.

**Siyabonga!**