

**SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MRS. REGINAH
MHAULE AT THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT AT FATHER CHARLES P
SCHOOL ON 17 JUNE 2014**

Programme Director and District Director, Mrs Nokuthula Mthethwa

Ward Councilor Nkosi

Chairperson of the School Governing Body, Mr LP Mkhonto

Members of Senior Management

Ms Mpumalanga 2014, Natashia dos Santos

Principal of Father Charles P School, Mrs. RT Mthethwa

Principals of (D&C P School, Siyata P School, Ekutfokoteni P School, Makhosonke P School and vuka P School)

Parents

Learners

Teachers

Members of the School Management Team

Non- Teaching Staff

Ladies and Gentlemen

Sanibonani

Thank you very much for hosting us.

Yesterday our country and its people celebrated the Youth Day, June 16.

1976 June 16 marked a turning point in the history of the struggle for liberation in South Africa as it heralded the popular Soweto Uprising that ignited and fueled the political awareness and involvement of ordinary South Africans in the fight against Apartheid. The uprising then escalated into a nation-wide revolt, revitalizing the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

This all began as a peaceful protest march, when more than 20 000 learners marched against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in Black secondary schools but ended with violence, tears, blood and death of a 13 year old boy, Hector Peterson.

Apart from the language issue, the 1976 students also demanded an education as good as that provided for white students. This demand vouched for the intent of the 1976 students generation to change their lives and the socio-economic status of South Africa for the better.

To counter the demands and expression of dissatisfaction with the education system, the police of the day used teargas and live bullets to disperse the crowd and students started throwing stones in retaliation. The students then started to attack everything they associated with the apartheid government.

To mark its historic significance and relevance, Jun 16, also known as Youth Day is celebrated as an official holiday and today marks the twentieth anniversary of South Africa Youth Day under the democratic dispensation.

This year's Youth Day Celebration is held under the theme; "Youth Moving South Africa Forward."

If we were to learn from the 1976 youth generation, we would not make this theme just a slogan but enact it with the same vigour that they fought Apartheid. Even though the political field has dramatically changed, some of the socio-economic challenges that we face today need the very same determination to move our beloved country forward.

In his 16 June 2013 Youth Day commemoration speech, President Jacob Zuma said;

"The latest studies also show that 72 per cent of South Africa's unemployed are younger than 34. Our education and development programmes are designed to correct these challenges. At the basic education level, we are focusing on improving access to schooling and to improve the learning conditions. It is for this reason that we have more than eight million children in no-fee school, over eight million children receiving nutritious meals at school and more than 800 000 being enrolled in Grade R compared to about 300 000 just a few years ago. The building and refurbishment of schools is continuing, to eradicate mud schools and other inappropriate structures."

The 2011 Census results inform us that South Africa is a youthful country and thus as a nation we still uphold the belief that education is the most important asset that our youth should acquire and that government should make quality education accessible to all our citizens. The youth is our future and investing in the youth is investing in the future of South Africa. Our social upliftment programmes such school nutrition, scholar transport, support of learners and teachers are part of this

Government's programmes to empower the youth to have an education without facing the daunting challenges of learning tired on an empty stomach.

Today, we are giving our fitting tributes to the heroes and heroines of 1976 June 16. Many of us have put on our school uniforms as a custom to celebrate this important day in the South African calendar.

This is a significant step in honour of the memory of all those who participated in the liberation movement especially those who have fallen in the course of the struggle for our liberation.

The greatest honour though would be for the youth of today to also take a feather from the Youth of 1976 by being on the forefront of the development of our country as the National Development Plan prioritizes young people as the main focal point of development.

Our appeal to the youth is to focus on their studies and to get involved in development programmes that will change our country for the better. The youth also needs to fight the temptation to use drugs such as alcohol and Nyaope as well as doing crime so that our communities could be stabilized in order to move forward. We also encourage the youth to join hands with government in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Let us draw lessons from the Youth of 1976 by making our own contributions towards the building of an educated and prosperous nation.

As we pay tribute to the Class of 1976, we acknowledge that under the new dispensation, every effort is made to improve access, quality curriculum delivery and learner performance.

A good story is that children are no longer denied education on the basis of affordability, gender, race or creed.

Government is putting measures to improve the delivery of education and these includes but is not limited to improvement of the conditions of service for teachers, improvement of school infrastructure, school nutrition, free delivery of LTSM, the list is endless.

Today we are donating school uniform to some learners of this school including those from:

- D&C P School
- Siyata P School

- Ekutfokoteni P School
- Vuka P School
- Makhosonke P School

This is an indication of our profound love for you and our wish that nothing should be a hindrance to your education.

Please take care of this uniform, wear it all the time at school and let it be an indication that today is better than yesterday and that tomorrow will be better than today. It feels good to be in school uniform and every one of us can attest to that.

I wish to thank all of you who made this possible. I also wish to thank your teachers, parents and to request them to support you all the time. You must in turn respect them and listen to their advice.

Ngiyabonga.