

Speech by the MEC for Education, Mrs Reginah Mhaule at the occasion of a meeting with principals of Gert Sibande District on 14 August 2014

Programme Director and DDG for Curriculum, Mrs Lucy Moyane

Chairperson of the Moral Regeneration Movement, Rev MM Nthali

Pastor Khoza

Head of Department, Mrs Mahlasedi Mhlabane

Members of Senior Management

District Director, Mrs Nokuthula Mthethwa

Members of the District Management Team

Circuit Managers

Principals

Sanibonani, Goeie Dag

Thank you very much for making time to attend this meeting. We are meeting at a time when we are left with ----- before the writing of the Annual National Assessment and 74 days before the commencement of the 2014 grade 12 examinations.

This therefore suggests that this confluence should in the main focus on the state of readiness for these two important tasks. Readiness in this case refers to the extent to which we are able to effectively manage the exams to be incident free.

It also refers to the state of readiness of our learners to achieve the required pass rate. In the main, it is about the Department reaching its targets.

I have been reliably informed that you had your review session recently and it will be interesting that we get an assurance in this meeting on what I have mentioned above.

We must do this because education is the only vehicle to free our people from the triple challenges of poverty, joblessness and inequality. The collective agreement is that only sound educational outcomes will help this country to move forward.

This will be realised if our learners pass in numbers and quality especially in Maths and Physical Science.

Maths, Science and Technology

I must say that in the current administration Mathematics, Science and Technology should find meaningful expression in all our programmes.

Everyone should embrace this and help to encourage our learners to take up and pass Mathematics, Science and Technology. This does not in any way sub-ordinate the other subjects as they are all important.

Remember the department established the Maths and Science Directorate led by Mrs Vuyiswa Mkhwanazi to ensure the realisation of this goal.

We also made a call that it must be compulsory for learners who are taking Physical Science to take Mathematics as well.

In addition, the province has established the Maths, Science and Technology Academy that is linked to 100 Secondary Schools.

This in essence says the province has increased its Dinaledi Schools from 48 to 100 schools. In the 2014/15 Policy and Budget Speech that I delivered on the 24th of July 2014 at the Provincial Legislature, I said these 100 schools have 20 550 grade 08 learners who are participating in Maths and Physical Science.

We must guarantee that all these learners will in January 2019 pass Maths and Physical Science with distinctions.

The number of learners who passed Maths and Physical Science in the 2013 grade 12 examinations is -----, ----- respectively.

I hope you do understand the task ahead of us in this regard. I once more want to request you to encourage our learners to take Maths and Science subjects.

We are aware that to achieve this goal our interest must be developed at an early age and that is why primary schools must come to the party. Gone are the days where primary schools will relax and not feel the pressure that their counter parts in secondary schools were feeling with regards to learner performance.

Our view is that if we can have a solid foundation it will be smooth sailing at the higher level.

I have directed that there must be more support for intermediate and senior phase schools by providing more curriculum implementers. These curriculum implementers must be adequately trained so that they can offer sound support at all times.

The 2014 Annual National Assessment Results must confirm that we are in the right course towards achieving the universally accepted results.

From here onwards, we expect every school principal to spend sleepless nights preparing learners for this assessment. Let's make sure that the results of this assessment to be released in December 2014 tell a positive story. I know that you are aware of the expected targets.

Early Childhood Development Institute

Equally, we believe that the development of learners at an early stage should be consolidated through the implementation of Early Childhood Development programmes working in collaboration with our sister departments of social development and health.

The province has already developed an integrated Early Childhood Development strategy that focuses on this.

The Early Childhood Development Institute is another milestone that must give the province an edge. This institute should be fully operation next year and will function as a hub to develop ECD practitioners.

ECD practitioners must be supported and we must re-look at their professional status, conditions of service and remuneration packages during this term. I know that some of these processes could be resolved by the province.

School Infrastructure

Provisioning of sanitation infrastructure, water and electricity to deserving schools should be on top of our priorities.

Cleanliness, safety and a carrying attitude are some of the key elements that our schools should display at all times.

Teacher Development

Most importantly, we must at all times be mindful that without teachers and good teachers at that all these plans may be in vain. Therefore it is imperative that our teacher development processes must be communicated in a manner that will instil a sense of appreciation, belonging and help to retain good teachers.

Our drive to recruit teachers must be enhanced and most of all I will really appreciate if we fast tract the profiling of teachers as I have indicated.

Our human resource strategy must be clear and be communicated so that there can be a buy in from all our stakeholders. We must all strive to move along with our stakeholders at all times.

What is also encouraging HOD is that already we have indentified issues raised by the Auditor General in that regard and we must work as if each day is an audit day.

ICT and e - learning

ICT should not be just a fancy concept that we use to look smart. We must understand it clearly and develop a programme with clear targets that can be monitored.

The Department will urgently develop a strategy to roll out ICT and e-learning and use it for effectively for teaching and learning. This will in the main allow us to bring our learners on par with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Our learners will then also be able to research and improve their computer skills at an early age.

Reading

Reading remains the foundation for learning. If we can improve reading in our schools, we will indeed improve learner performance across the system. We need to ensure that our learners develop reading skills that are in relation to their development age. This should be done at the earliest stage in a manner that is interesting and enjoyable to our learners.

All said and done, we must work with our sister departments and Non-Governmental organisations to ensure the plight of learners with special education needs is met.

We need to work together to bring our society to the realisation that learners with special needs should be supported and encouraged at all times so as to benefit from our schooling system.

Non Negotiable

The sector has already indentified the non- negotiable which must find expression in resources and effort.

These were looked at during the recent Strategic Development Planning Session held on 07 to 08 August 2014 and they include but are not limited to the following:

- Improve the intake and performance of learners in Maths, Science and Technology through the programmes of the Provincial Maths, Science and Technology Academy
- Retrain all excess educators to teach Maths in lower grades
- Finalise and operationalise the Early Childhood Development Institute (ECDI)
- Enhance the support of teachers in intermediate and Senior phase
- Improve ICT Connectivity in schools and ensure that schools are ICT compliant
- Bridge the gap between former model C and previously disadvantaged schools
- Profile teachers in terms of age, gender, subjects and qualifications

- Curb the rate of teacher resignations by empowering teachers on wellness and financial management
- Improve communication with schools and ensure that issues are acknowledged and responded to on time
- Ensure that all schools have water, sanitation facilities and electricity
- Ensure that schools become centres of care and support
- Fill in all vacant funded post timeously especially teaching posts.
- Improve the process of appointing school principals
- Procure e- Text Books for MST Schools
- Improve the results of the Annual National Assessment to 75% in Numeracy and Literacy and Grade 12 results to 90% in 2019.

The session approved a new vision, mission statements and corporate values for the department which are the following:

Vision

Advocating Excellence in Quality Education Delivery

Mission

The Mpumalanga Department of Education working together with its stakeholders is committed to render effective teaching and learning through good governance, management and leadership.

Corporate values

Accountability
 Innovation
 Integrity
 Transformation

Together We Move South Africa Forward

Conclusion

We need to translate this vision and mission into action to move our country and its development further. Let us strive for excellence at our schools as we change the lives of our children creating a brighter future for them in the process.

I want to implore you to work towards this goal so that we can find ourselves on the good side of history with regards to education delivery and development.

This is our time, this is our country, let us work together to teach our children to be better citizens who effectively participate in building the economy of our country and its people.

Ngiyabonga.