

Speech delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule at the Occasion of the Announcement of the 2014 grade 12 results at Umjindi Local Municipality.

Programme Director and Head of Department, Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane

Honourable Members of the Executive Council

Leadership of the House of Traditional Leaders

Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Education, Culture, Sport and Recreation, Hon Thulare Madileng

Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District, Cllr Letta Shongwe

Executive Mayors in particular the hosting Mayor, Cllr Lazarus Mashaba

Religious Leaders

Councilors

Representatives of Political Parties

Director General; Dr. Nonhlanhla Mkhize,

Heads of Departments and Members of Senior Management

Circuit Managers

Representatives of Education Unions

Representative of the Associations of School Governing Bodies

Representatives of Learner Formations

Parents of Top Learners

Our Top Learners

Our beloved Teachers

Principals present here today

Representatives from our Sponsors

Representatives from the Media

Officials from the Department

Dlomodlomo School Choir

Representatives of the Exam Board

Representatives of Different Universities

Members of the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign

Miss Mpumalanga 2014, Natasha Dos Santos

Members of the Community who are listening on different Radio Stations

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sanibonani

Compliments of the New Season!

We are humbled by the fact that you had to cut your holidays short and prioritise the importance of education in order to be part of this occasion. This makes us comfortable at all times because we regard you as our fundamental pillar of strength without which education delivery will be a pipe dream.

I request to be allowed to acknowledge the presence of the leadership of the University of Mpumalanga. We have in our midst the Deputy Vice

Chancellor Academic, Prof Ric Bernard and the Executive Secretary to Council, Mr. Sandile Mabuza.

It feels good to stand here knowing matters of Higher Education are henceforth accessible at our door step and that the establishment and coming into operation of the University of Mpumalanga is a good story to tell.

The Head of Department stated in her remarks that this country has travelled a long journey to be where we are today. The twenty years of freedom and democracy was a learning curve, an eye opener to most of us and we take pride at what this country has achieved so far while acknowledging that a lot still needs to be done.

Our children are no longer learning under trees but in well-built state of the art schools most of which are No- Fee- Paying Schools with a guarantee of a nutritious meal for a day, free learning and teaching support material, exposure to qualified and trained teachers and in an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning.

Those who are orphans who were mainly in small farm and multi-grade schools, are now benefitting from the boarding school arrangement that is fully funded by our provincial government and children with disabilities are equally accommodated in our education system through our inclusive education programme.

Notwithstanding some challenges, this is our story, a South African narrative and a legacy of the past 20 years that we must not be shy in proclaiming and articulating.

Programme Director, the current government administration has made it clear that everything within its power must be done to alleviate poverty,

inequality and unemployment. The delivery of quality education is therefore central to the means of achieving this vision.

This therefore puts a mammoth responsibility on all citizens of this country, not only to rally side by side with the Department of Education, but to make it their obligation to see to it that education works and to see to it that the vision of this country that is profoundly postulated in the National Development Plan (NDP) is realised.

The NDP clearly states that we need to work around the clock to create conditions for growth and prosperity where at the end the masses of our people can concede and say in unison that:

“We participate fully in efforts to liberate ourselves from conditions that hinder the flowering of our talents”

This resonates very well with what is articulated in the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa where it says we need to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.

This is our obligation and everything possible will be done (working with our stakeholders) to achieve this goal.

Credibility of the Results

The 2014 Grade 12 results that we are about to deliver have been declared credible by Umalusi; the only body that has the jurisdiction to pronounce on the status and credibility of the examinations in South Africa. This declaration was made on 30 December 2014 and on this matter the Chairperson of Umalusi, Professor John Volmink said:

*“Having studied **all** the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the National Senior Certificate examinations administered by the Department of Basic Education, Umalusi is satisfied that nothing has compromised the integrity or credibility of the examination process. We are satisfied that the examinations were fair, valid and credible. We commend DBE for running a successful and credible examination process. Accordingly, we hereby approve the release of the results of the National Senior Certificate Examinations, administered by the Department of Basic Education.”*

We are encouraged that for half a decade, Mpumalanga Province has managed an incident free, reliable and credible examination process. We have turned the corner, thanks to the men and women who rose above the norm to make this possible.

The wish of the leadership of the Honourable Premier, Mr. DD Mabuza is to see the majority of our learners receiving quality results that will open doors to their future. That is our obligation and we are committed to spend sleepless nights making it our responsibility to see to it that learners excel in Mathematics, Physical Science and Technology in big numbers.

Overall performance

Programme Director, the total number of full time learners who sat for the Grade 12 Examinations in 2014 is **45 081** and of this number **35 615** have passed.

On that score, it gives me pleasure to announce that the grade 12 class of 2014 has achieved a **79%** pass rate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the above statistics depict a **1.4%** improvement from the 2013 Grade 12 pass rate.

This represents a consistent and overall improvement of results by **31.1%** since the **47.9%** pass rate of 2009.

DISTRICTS

Of the four districts, Ehlanzeni has recorded the highest pass rate, obtaining **82.1%** in 2014 compared to the **82.8%** in 2013.

Ehlanzeni is followed by Nkangala district with **78.8%** which is an improvement from the **77.5%** obtained in 2013.

Gert Sibande district performed at **77.1%** obtaining third position among the four districts which is an improvement from the **76.4%** obtained in 2013.

Bohlabela district has recorded a pass rate of **76.8%** in 2014. In 2013, this District obtained **72%**. This means that it has improved by **4.8%**, making it the most improved district in the province. This District has registered a total improvement of **48.6%** since 2009. It is amongst the most improving Districts in the country. This is indeed worth appreciating.

I hope you have noticed that not only were the examination processes managed meticulously but the province has experienced an unprecedented improvement of results. For six years in succession, the province improved its results and has for the first time performed above the national average with all the four districts also performing above the **national average of 75.8%**.

CIRCUITS PERFORMANCE

Of the **68** circuits within the province, Mashishing Circuit from Bohlabela district is declared the overall best performing circuit after obtaining a **95.1%** pass rate in 2014.

34 circuits performed between 80% and 100% and **32** performed above **60%** but below **80%**.

There are only two circuits from the **68** that performed below **60%**.

I am going to have a discussion that will see all Circuit Managers signing an agreement committing themselves that in 2015 no single circuit will perform below **70%**. Circuit Managers should await an invitation from my office in due course.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Of the **543** schools, **27** of them obtained **100%** pass rate. This marks a radical improvement from the **10** schools that obtained **100%** in 2009. It is encouraging that the quintile 1 to **3** schools have entered this threshold in an increased manner.

260 schools performed at **80%** and above but did not manage to reach 100%. **172** performed above **60%** but below **80%**.

Though we directed that no school should obtain a percentage below 60% in 2014, there are schools that did not heed the call and have performed at this level. Principals from these schools should account to the provincial

community about this outcome. We regard such performance as mediocre and unacceptable.

The school that obtained the number one position provincially for the 2014 academic year is **Hoërskool Nelspruit** which obtained **100%** having enrolled and passed all **230** learners.

The school that obtained the most distinctions is **Hoërskool Nelspruit** with a total of **348** distinctions against the provincial total of **8 222** distinctions, which is a contribution of **4.2%** distinctions to the province.

Again, **Hoërskool Nelspruit** is the school obtaining the highest number of Bachelors with **176** out of the **230** candidates obtaining Bachelor passes.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Our collective view is that independent schools should excel in the true sense of the word. I do not think it is too much to ask to demand high levels of excellence from these schools considering the amount of fees that parents have to contend parting with.

From the **36** independent schools which wrote Public Examinations, **17** of these obtained results below the provincial average.

The Head of Department will ensure adherence to policy prescripts in this regard.

SUBJECT PERFORMANCE

In 2013, **529** learners passed **Mathematics** with distinctions; this number has declined to **392** learners in 2014.

In 2013, **388** learners passed **Physical Science** with distinctions and in 2014 this number has increased to **389** learners. There are two learners who obtained 100% this time around compared to three in 2013. We are deeply concerned about the decline in both enrolment and performance in these critical subjects.

The Department will accelerate all efforts of making sure that the established Mathematics, Science and Technology Academy yields the expected results as soon as possible. Those who are involved in the affairs of this Academy should know that their area of responsibility will henceforth be a 24 hour service because this is the main vehicle for us to achieve the goals of the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path. In the same breath, we encourage parents and teachers to motivate and urge learners to take these subjects.

Equally, the number of learners who met the Bachelor requirement has decreased from **12 954** obtained in 2013 to **11 229** in 2014. This represents **24.9%** of learners that have written. This requires attention from all of us to ensure that we improve both qualitatively and quantitatively.

MUNICIPALITY

Programme Director, of the **18** municipalities in the province, Nkomazi Local Municipality is the top municipality after having obtained **86% in 2014** and has recorded an improvement of **0.4%** from their 2013 results. The Department commits to work with all municipalities and stakeholders to ensure that results reach satisfactory levels in 2015 and beyond.

SUPPORT TO LEARNERS WHO FAILED

Sadly **9 466** candidates did not make it.

These learners need our full support. Those who qualify for supplementary examinations are advised and where possible should be assisted to use this opportunity to make the grade.

I insist that learners who failed for the first time should be given a second chance to repeat the grade. There must be no reason that can prevent schools from adhering to this clarion call.

The Department has a team of officials that will be ready to offer counseling services to learners and their parents should there be a need. Should a parent observe unfamiliar behavioral patterns from their children, they need not hesitate to contact our Director for Inclusive Education; Ms. Philile Mbatha at **0837699772** or at p.mbatha@education.mpu.gov.za or they can call the Departmental toll free line at **0800 203 116** during office hours.

BURSARIES

The Department will ensure that learners, who passed exceptionally well, especially those who may have difficulties in finding access to institutions of Higher Education due to financial challenges, are fully supported by the Provincial Government.

All those who applied for provincial government bursary will receive feedback before the end of February 2015 on whether their applications have been successful or not.

We are encouraged by offers that we received from other institutions which are keen to assist in this regard. One such institution is the Mining Qualifications Authority which requested that we assist them in identifying **90** learners who are interested in pursuing a career in mining engineering.

I will make sure that my phone is opened for anyone or institution that is willing to extend a helping hand in this regard.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS FOR 2015

Following these results, the Department will continue to intensify its school based intervention programme, meaning that schools will be supported in accordance to their specific circumstances in an effort to ensure that all schools particularly the **84** underperforming ones improve their results and no school drops its results.

The 84 schools that performed below **60%** are thus declared dysfunctional and will be placed under terms to improve their results as prescribed by policy.

Programme Director, our target was to improve the results by 10% which would have translated to **87.6%** pass rate today. We are not comfortable about having not achieved this goal. I am convinced though that this goal is not insurmountable. To this effect a special senior management meeting has been convened for the 8th of January 2015 to analyse the results further and confirm how best the improvement plan can be accelerated to improve the 2015 results.

Furthermore engagements will be held with our partners so that we together can address the challenges and work towards the attainment of this goal.

We have observed that we need to work around the clock to improve the quality of school support visits by Subject Specialists and curriculum monitoring by School Management Teams.

We will increase time invested in teacher workshops and training and improve the ability to set quality tasks by teachers.

Poor moderation practices and marking practices should as a matter of urgency improve in order for the province to obtain the desired results.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education will on an ongoing basis and in a more intensified manner conducts workshops for subject advisors for Mathematics, Physical Science, Accounting and Economics in the FET and GET Bands.

Together with SGBs we will ensure that schools offer a curriculum dispensation that responds to the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path.

We will also broadcast lessons for Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Technology through clusters.

All schools will be expected to set performance targets per subject per grade and utilize diagnostic reports, reviews as well as subject and learner profiles to inform intervention strategies.

SPECIAL AWARDS

It has always been part of our tradition in this occasion to acknowledge special people who make meaningful contributions to the advancement of education in general. These are men and women who against all odds soldiered on to contribute progressively in the education front.

Our view is that the province must look up to them and be inspired to make an effort to contribute to their own welfare and that of others.

Of significance is that these people serve as true role models for our children.

I therefore request the hosting Executive Mayor, Cllr Lazarus Mashaba and the District Executive Mayor, Cllr Letta Shongwe to join me on stage to confer these awards.

MS. BADANILE ZULU

This year we want to acknowledge the contribution made by Ms. Badanile Zulu, affectionately known as “Make Zuka” who was taught the value of giving at a very young age. She comes from a poor family, and this taught her patience and sharing. This religious vibrant lady collects 5 cents (Zuka) from the surrounding communities and uses the money to buy school uniforms for orphaned and children living below the breadline. She has

been doing this for a number of years and her selflessness propelled me that we need to express our appreciation.

I have been inspired by her courage and as such felt it necessary to use this occasion to honor her. I request her to ascend the stage to collect our token of appreciation.

MR. DINGISWAYO JOSEPH MTHETHWA

We also wish to recognize Mr. Dingiswayo Joseph Mthethwa from Bushbuckridge Local Municipality. He has been a principal of Orhovelani Secondary school and has since 1975 shown his love for teaching. His achievements have been rewarded, not only provincially, but nationally as well.

Mr. Mthethwa was recognized as the Provincial Lifetime Achiever in 2012 and was placed second nationally in this category for the 2012 National Teaching Awards. In 2012, he wanted to go on retirement, but we persuaded him to stay on because of his resourcefulness.

In the past few years he registered more than 300 learners in Grade 12, all of whom were doing Mathematics. His school has never performed below **70%** since 2009.

A Mathematics enthusiast, Mr. Mthethwa, came back from retirement to continue with his love and passion of teaching Mathematics due to his track record of producing good results dating back to late 1970's. By his own admission, he wanted to be a medical doctor and because he could not become one, he then opted to become a teacher in order to produce medical doctors, engineers and others.

I request Mr Mthethwa to humbly ascend the stage to receive appreciation from the people of the province.

MR. PAUL MTHIMUNYE

Mr. Paul Mthimunye, one of the most dedicated educationists with a career spanning more than 40 years and former Chief Director in the Mpumalanga Department of Education, continues to be very instrumental in promoting education in and around Steve Tshwete Local Municipality.

He has established the Paul Mthimunye Foundation that assists students with bursaries. To date a number of students have benefited from his foundation some of whom have already graduated from universities.

I just imagine what South Africa and the world would turn out to be if those that have the means could follow in Paul Mthimunye's footsteps. With the NDP set out for such development, imagine where this province will be in 2030, with people like Mr. Paul Mthimunye.

Baba uMthimunye, I humbly request that you ascend the stage to receive your token of appreciation from the people of the place of the rising sun.

THEMBA MAPHANGA AND SIBUSISO KGASIBE

Themba Maphanga and **Sibusiso Kgasibe** are learners with disabilities attending at Thanduxolo Special School in Emalahleni Local Municipality. They were part of the South African Team that played in Brazil. This team brought home a silver medal.

Like we always say that disability should at no stage be a barrier for one's emancipation. These boys proved beyond reasonable doubt that they have the courage to triumph on the world stage.

I request the two boys to ascend the stage to receive our tokens of appreciation.

DR. CASSIUS REGINALD LUBISI

Dr. Cassius Reginald Lubisi was born in Mpumalanga and is currently the Director-General in The Presidency and Secretary of Cabinet. He is an accomplished academic, educationist, public service manager and strategist who bring to The Presidency many years of experience at a strategic level in the public service and academia.

Previously, Dr. Lubisi was the Superintendent-General of the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, where he was responsible for the overall strategic direction and management of the Department.

Prior to joining the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government as Head of Department in 2005, Dr. Lubisi was Deputy Director-General for General Education and Training in the national Department of Education. He has also served as Special Adviser to Former Education Minister, Professor Kader Asmal.

Dr. Lubisi, on behalf of the people of our province, I want to recognize and appreciate your contributions and achievements as well as for flying the flag of the province high. Just as Mpumalanga Province produced Ms World, it also produced a Director General in the Presidency.

Dr Lubisi, I request that you ascend the stage so that our people can appreciate your achievements and contributions to efforts of improving the lives of all people for the better.

STATE OF READINESS FOR SCHOOL RE-OPENING

Ladies and Gentlemen, schools in this province will re-open on **14 January 2015**. The Department has done its best to ensure that teaching and learning starts without hassles on the first school day.

The Department has dispatched the Learning and Teaching Support Material to all schools which placed orders, the post establishment was issued last year, paper budgets for 2015 were issued last year as well.

The admission of learners for 2015 started in May 2014 and only critical cases will be entertained in the next two weeks.

I am aware that the Province suffered heavy rainfalls during the festive season. The Department is working with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport to take stock of the situation in order to put remedial processes in place where damages to school property occurred.

We request the whole provincial community to play its role in preparing our learners to be ready for schooling in 2015, as they used to do over the years.

I am making a special request to all members of School Governing Bodies to mobilise parents to help clean schools from this weekend so that by the time our children arrive on the day of re-opening, they find the environment inviting. This is in keeping to the Departmental Rhandza Xikolo Xa Wena Campaign.

I am going to visit Bonukukhanya Primary School on Friday, 09 January 2015 at 10H00 in line with the call I have made. I invite those who can to come and join us. If you cannot make it to Dipaliseng, please identify a school next door and extend a helping hand.

On Monday, 12 January 2015 the province will open the fourth boarding school at Emakhazeni Local Municipality. You are thus cordially invited.

MESSAGES OF APPRECIATION

After the announcement of results last night by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga, the Department received a long list of messages of appreciation from all corners of the country and province. I request to read the message from the Honourable Premier, Mr. DD Mabuza.

Congratulatory Message by the Hon. Premier Mr. DD Mabuza to the 2014 Grade 12 Class.

Dear Class of 2014

Allow me to take this opportunity on behalf of the Premier of Mpumalanga Province Honourable DD Mabuza and the people of this beautiful province at large to express my outmost appreciation to the Class of 2014. You have worked hard over the past eleven grades to ensure that your Grade 12 examination results are a culmination and a true reflection of all those years.

As you are about to embark on different journeys that will lead you to your destinies, remember that you are ambassadors of our beloved province, Mpumalanga, a place of the rising sun.

Your success gives us, the people of the rising sun, confidence to walk tall and proud as we continue to take this province into greater heights.

Our government will continue to work even harder to ensure that we deliver matric results that are reliable and credible through continuous improvement of our examination management systems. We will work tirelessly to perfect our systems and we will leave no stone unturned.

These results are indicative of the commitment and hard work of the ruling party of the government of the day in ensuring that our learners irrespective of race, colour and creed receive quality education that will enable them to live a better life in future. As we continue to improve the curricula we believe that this will also lead not only to the increase in the number of learners that pass matric but also an increase in the quality of the results. We know that it will not be smooth sailing. From time to time we expect to face challenges, but we are fully prepared for those challenges.

Since the dawn of our democracy in 1994 we have prioritized education as we strongly believe that socio- economic transformation of our society depends on the quality of our education system. This therefore entails that an educated workforce is the foundation of every growth and development of the economy of the province in particular and the country in general.

It is therefore important to note that the results you have in your possession are not merely a paper, but an opportunity to drastically improve your life and that of your community.

To the learners who did not make it this time around, this is by no means the end of the road. Contrary this presents an opportunity for you to go back to school and improve your results. It may sound and even feel be a bit confusing now as you are feeling down and hopeless, but I can assure you, you can make it, you will make it; by just putting in an extra effort and working harder this year. You are also welcome to choose the Technical and Vocational Education and Training stream where you will gain

technical skills. In the province we currently have one TVET College for every District Municipality. I strongly recommend that you also consider this option as entry requirements are less stringent than those required by universities.

I plead with you not to give up as you will be taking the easy way out, which may bring detrimental consequences in the future. It was Mary Anne Radmacher who reminded us that “ Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying I will try again tomorrow.” At the end of today listen to that quiet voice that Marry Anne was talking about and try again this year.

All learners who qualify for supplementary examinations are encouraged to register at their respective schools to write these exams. You are encouraged to grab this opportunity with both hands. I request parents to provide proper guidance and support to their children who may feel as if they have reached the end of the world. As parents we need to support and offer our children hope and give them direction during these difficult transitional times.

It would be an injustice if I don't also express my sincere gratitude to our teachers. You play a great role in building our societies. It takes great patience, dedication and mostly love and passion to instill knowledge in our children. You are a source of inspiration to our learners.

We truly appreciate your hard work, Thank you.

Congratulations again to all our class of 2014.

I wish you and the people of Mpumalanga Province a peaceful and productive year-2015.

END

THANK THE SPONSORS

I want to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation to all persons and institutions that supported the Department towards the success of this event. We made sure that the sponsors are acknowledged on your programmes and accreditations cards.

I however feel obliged to list the institutions that supported us for this event in no particular order:

Imperial Toyota Nelspruit our main sponsor, Sasol, Tsb, Sanlam, Mustek, Anglo American Coal, Vodacom, Nkangala JSM Transport Operators, FNB, Bongani Rainmakers, MTN, Mining Qualifications Authority, Barberton Mines, Penreach, Mathata General Trading, Mpfumelelo Business Enterprise, Standard Bank, Umzubanzi Coal, Big Fish Music Production and Protea Hotels.

I request to read just one of the letters the Department received in a form of sponsorship towards this event. It reads as follows:

Dear Honourable Mrs. Reginah Mhaule.

With the greatest pleasure I want to acknowledge the strides made by your Department with regards to the improvement of Grade 12 results and learner performance. It is in that regard that I volunteer my musical participation in your 2014 Announcement of Grade 12 results to be held on 06 January 2015 in Barberton at no cost to the Department.

It will be my delight to be part of this glorious event.

Regards,

Mr. Sipho Makhabane ; Founder: Big Fish Music

Sadly Mr. Makhabane was involved in a car accident on Sunday, 20 December 2014 and is still in hospital. I have reliable information that he is responding well to treatment.

I have read his letter so that all of us present here and those who are listening on different radio stations could pray for his speedy recovery.

SPECIAL TRIBUTES

I also wish to take this time and thank the Hon. Premier, Mr. DD Mabuza for allowing us space to lead on this front. His support has always propelled us to do more.

Equally, the support and guidance we receive from Members of the Executive Council is always appreciated.

We also attribute this positive outcome to the guidance we have received from time to time from the Members of the Provincial Legislature including the opposition parties. Thank you very much for keeping us on alert.

The Education Labour Movement (Unions) has always led from the front in this province by ensuring that there is relative stability for teaching and learning processes to take place. I do not have adequate words to thank them enough.

Equally, I wish to extend our appreciation for the support that we continue to receive from parents through their Associations of School Governing Bodies.

I always feel indebted to the Religious Leaders of this province who have occupied the education space in an unprecedented manner. They are doing everything possible to ensure that we are balanced at all times.

Thank you so much to my Pastors and the Leadership of the Moral Regeneration Movement.

We cannot forget officials under the stewardship of our Head of Department, Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane and the guidance they always receive from members of the Provincial Management Committee Meetings which is chaired by the Provincial Director General, Dr. Mkhize, Khabazela.

We thank the media for the unwavering support rendered to the Department throughout the year. Their contribution goes a long way.

We also thank everyone and every institution that supported and continues to support the delivery of education in this province and in the country in general. Like we always say, education is everybody's enterprise.

CONCLUSION

Our founding father of democracy and freedom, the late Dr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela once said:

“It always seems impossible until it's done”

On that note, I wish to thank all of you for the support to this Department and to the province in general.

Ngiyabonga.

