

Keynote Address for the Occasion of the Inaugural Meeting of the newly elected members of the School Governing Bodies on 09 June 2015

Programme Director and Head of Department, **Mrs Mahlasedi Mhlabane**

Member of the Mayor Committee of Mbombela Local Municipality; **Cllr M Mazibane**

Chairperson of the Moral Regeneration Movement; **Rev MM Nthali**

President of the NASGB ; **Mr Elphus Maseko**

Provincial Manager of FEDSAS; **Mrs Constanze Van der Walt**

Provincial Chairperson of SANASE , **Mr H Nzolo**

Members of Senior Management

Chairpersons and Secretaries of School Governing Bodies

Principals

Pretty Mhlongo

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sanibonani,

Thank you very much for attending this meeting and congratulations for being elected to the School Governing Body following a seamless election process.

I wish to upfront thank all role-players who made the 2015 elections possible and a success.

They have created a fertile ground for us to work together to advance programmes for the attainment of quality education.

The South African Schools Act categorically states that a school governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school.

It further says the governing body of a public school must promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

I am confident that the future of our province looks bright now that you are at the helm of governance of our **1757** schools.

The Department has adopted new vision and mission statements which should inform all our efforts and must be embraced by all schools.

The vision statement says:

Advancing Excellence in Quality Education Delivery

The Mission Statement reads as follows:

The Mpumalanga Department of Education commits to work with its stakeholders to promote effective teaching and learning through good governance, capable management and proficient leadership.

The Department has equally adopted integrity, accountability, professionalism, consultation, transformation and innovation as its key corporate values for the next five years.

I am therefore making a humble plea to all schools and to everyone present here to embrace these values, vision and mission statements.

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PAST FIVE YEARS

Programme Director since 2009 the Department working collaboratively with its stakeholders managed to:

- Improve the management and outcomes of the performance of learners especially in grade 12 from **47.9%** in 2009 to **79% in 2014**.
- Improved the financial management of the Department that led to the receipt of Unqualified Audit Opinions from the Office of the Auditor General for the past four years. This in our view creates an enabling environment towards the attainment of a Clean Audit Outcome.
- Increase the number of children who are accessing our Early Childhood Development Centres from **10 922** in 2000 to **62 497** in 2015. The Province boasts about the recently established Early Childhood Development Institute that is located in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.
- Establish a Maths, Science and Technology Academy that is located at Emalahleni Local Municipality,
- Construct four new boarding schools to address challenges that are brought about by the multi-grade and small schools.
- Establish the University of Mpumalanga one of the first Universities to be built within the democratic dispensation through the collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training.

CHALLENGES

While we celebrate these achievements we are concerned about a few issues which if not addressed urgently and decisively have a potential to reverse the gains made. These includes but is not limited to the following:

- Disruption of teaching and learning by the so called service delivery protests, or concerned parents.
- The rate of school violence, vandalism of school property, teenage pregnancy, and high learner dropout rate, gangsterism and drug trafficking in schools.
- Low rate of intake of maths and science subjects by learners and the reluctance to teach history by some schools.
- The underperformance of our learners in grades 3, 6 and 9 is really a cause for concern.

- Lack of maintenance of school infrastructure and non-involvement of the majority of our parents in matters of education.
- Mismanagement of finances, lack of accountability and dysfunctional schools.

ADDRESSING MATHS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Department has introduced several programmes in 2015 that require monitoring by Circuit Managers and School Governing Bodies.

These programmes include the following:

The Department is supporting Study Group Leaders in **250** schools that performed below 60 % in Mathematics and Physical Sciences in the 2014 National Senior Certificate.

3 000 Grade 12 Mathematics and Physical Sciences Study Groups and **4 080** Grade 9 Mathematics Study Groups are being trained on Saturdays from 23 May to 05 September 2015.

These Study Group leaders are provided with a Study Guide and a Workbook to record activities of the study group.

The Department also introduced the 1+4 Intervention Model from the beginning of 2015 for grades 8 and 9 Mathematics teachers. Teachers from these grades meet on Mondays to discuss Mathematics lessons and plans to be taught at schools that week.

Feedback from monitoring teams indicates that teachers benefit from the 1 + 4 sessions and are using the lessons in their day-to-day teaching.

The Department has designated certain school days as **Mathematics Focus Days** to be observed by all schools. On this day the school must engage in a range of Mathematics activities such as: Mathematics revision lessons, competitions; Olympiads and address by mathematics gurus.

I am using this platform to request members of school governing bodies to encourage our children to consider taking Mathematics and Physical Science

because the Province has already created an enabling environment for them to excel in these subjects.

PROMOTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Programme Director at the occasion of the tabling of the 2015/16 Policy and Budget Speech, I stated that all our schools should be able to teach an African Language.

I want to remind members that; “**Tsine sibemdzabu base Africa**”, we are proud Africans and our being is embodied in Ubuntu.

We embrace diversity which is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and will do anything and everything to ensure that our schools inculcate the essence of social cohesion, respect for human rights and reconciliation.

We are mindful that language plays a significant role in the realisation of what I have mentioned above.

So far, there are **39** schools which are currently piloting the teaching of African Languages. The information at my disposal is that the pilot was well received and is progressing well.

The Department will put systems in place to ensure that in the near future there must be no school that does not teach an African language.

I request all School Governing Bodies to take account of the fact that the promotion of African Languages is essential and ensure that it is always on their meetings’ agenda.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

We are mindful that the condition, location and nature of school infrastructure have an impact on access to the attainment of quality education.

The Department is doing everything to ensure the improvement of school infrastructure including the provisioning of water and sanitation facilities.

In this context, it is imperative to acknowledge that members of School Governing Bodies have a responsibility to ensure the maintenance of school buildings and resources.

The South African Schools Act states that a school governing body must administer and control the school property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including hostels if applicable.

I humbly request that you do everything possible to eradicate the rate of vandalism, theft of school property and to ensure that the school environment is at all times safe and inviting.

Our children spend their entire day at school therefore it remains fair that the school surroundings are at all times free from any hazard.

The Department has launched the Rhandza Xi Kolo Xa Wena Campaign to inculcate a culture of responsibility in every member of the community and to ensure a sound ambience of all our schools. I request that everyone in this hall should henceforth be an ambassador for this campaign.

A team from the Office of the Auditor General visited some schools and found that not all classrooms were used and that those that were not used for teaching and learning were very dirty.

Again, I refer to the South African Schools Act which says; a school governing body must encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school.

SANITATION, WATER AND ELECTRICITY PROVISION

Programme Director, the Department has prioritised a project to eradicate and replace inappropriate sanitation infrastructure, provide water reticulation systems and carry out the installation of electricity and this project is in progress.

The Department is working together with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, Mvula Trust and the Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust to accelerate the implementation of this project.

We request that you work with these implementing agencies so that this programme can unfold seamlessly.

Our intention is that there must be no school within the province that does not have proper ablution facilities.

Equally so, I request that you make it your undertaking to ensure that school ablution facilities are at all times kept clean.

QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING STRUCTURES

In his State of the Nation Address, presented to the joint sitting of Parliament in Cape Town on 3rd June 2009, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. JG Zuma, stated that:

*“We reiterate our non-negotiables. Teachers should be in school and in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty and no abuse of pupils!
The children should be in class, on time, learning, be respectful of their teachers and each other, and do their homework”.*

Following that pronouncement the Department launched *an education campaign to:*

- Inform citizens about the importance of education and their roles, responsibilities and obligations towards education;
- Mobilise communities to monitor and support schools, teachers and learners and
- Improve the quality of education for all children, especially the poor, and to demonstrate this improved quality via improved learner achievement.

Subsequently, Quality and Learning Structures (QLTC) were established from schools to the Provincial level.

It gives me pleasure to state that the Department worked very well with the Provincial QLTC structures.

We attribute the success that the Department is enjoying to the collaboration of purpose that existed between these structures.

The QLTC structures were established to ensure that the pledges which parents undertook to promote teaching and learning are adhered to without fail.

These pledges are appearing on your programmes to enable you to read them at your own spare time.

What is critical is that following the SGB elections, we must start a process to elect new members of the QLTC in keeping to democratic principles.

The Department will shortly engage the structures to develop guidelines on the process which will unfold throughout the province. It is important to note that the QLTC structure is a sub-committee of the School Governing Body.

ADMISSION OF LEARNERS FOR 2016

Programme Director, I hope members of the School Governing Body are aware that in terms of the Admission Policy, the Head of Department is required to determine a process of registration for admission in public schools.

This helps to enable the admission of learners to take place in a timely and efficient manner.

That policy further states that the Head of Department and the School Governing Bodies should encourage parents to apply for admission of their children before the end of the preceding school calendar year.

Based on this policy context, the Head of Department, Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane has after consulting with the Associations of School Governing Bodies developed guidelines for the admission of learners for 2016.

The guidelines state that all public schools in Mpumalanga Province are directed to start a process of admitting learners from **01 June 2015 until 28 August 2015**.

Unless directed otherwise by the Head of Department, Principals and Centre Managers are required to manage this process in their respective institutions and

to compile reports to update the line function on progress in accordance to the Admission Policy of learners.

Schools' admission policies must always take into account the constitutional mandates and should be in line with the dictates of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996.

District Directors must submit their progress reports to the Head of Department on **30 September 2015**.

Circuit Managers will be expected to lead all processes of addressing critical cases that may arise from the recruitment and admission process. This process must be finalized by **16 October 2015**.

A final report on the admission of learners must be submitted by District Directors to the Head of Department on or before **30 October 2015**.

I request that you work around the clock to ensure a seamless admission process for 2016.

What is imperative to us is that we should make a clarion call to our parents to register their children in schools closest to their homesteads. This is very important because it will enhance programmes of ensuring that their children receive education in totality, participate in curricular enrichment programmes and will in turn improve the children's safety.

In the spirit of innovation, which is part of our corporative values it will be prudent that we proactively look at how admission will take place in Mbombela, Mkhondo, Emalahleni and Steve Tshwete Local Municipalities.

These are local municipalities that frequently experience admission challenges year in and year out.

The New Chief Director for District Support, Mr. Mfana Lushaba will immediately establish a special admission team to undertake this task.

I request the School Governing Bodies within these municipalities to work side by side with the Department in this regard.

LEARNERS WITHOUT IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

The Department is working with the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that all learners within our system have the required documentation.

I request that you encourage all parents to make it their responsibility to ensure that their children have the requisite Birth Certificates and Identity Documents.

All learners are encouraged to take advantage of school holidays to visit their nearest Home Affairs offices to apply for ID Cards.

There will further be road shows that will be embarked on towards the realization of this objective. We will be very much pleased if this item could be discussed in every parent's meeting at the school level.

DICTATES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT

Programme Director, the South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 must remain the guiding document for everything that the School Governing Body does or articulates.

The Act requires of the School Governing Body to support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

It is in this context that we request members of the School Governing Body to avail their time and to serve honestly and with integrity at all times.

I strongly and humbly request that every School Governing Body should create a favorable environment for the Religious Community through the Moral Regeneration Movement to be actively involved in our schools and to help in instilling a culture of responsibility and good behavior from our learners.

This is in keeping to the constitutional imperatives that guarantees the freedom of religion, belief and opinion. It states that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

It further says religious observance may be conducted at state or state aided institutions, provided that:

- (a) Those observance follow the rules made by the appropriate public authorities
- (b) They are conducted on equitable basis, and
- (c) Attendance at them is free and voluntary

Our collective view is the involvement of the religious community in our schools will add impetus in our quest to free our schools from all forms of social ills including racism, discrimination, corruption and lawlessness.

Equally, may I also appeal to all of you to create an enabling space to work with the local community structures, labour unions and sister Departments?

PROCUREMENT OF LTSM

School Governing Bodies have a role to play in ensuring that schools order the right Learning and Teaching Material on time.

It must be the duty of each parent to sign for books issued to learners and also taking responsibility for their return or replacement. Parents must at all times ensure that school books are stored neatly, returned to schools and to make means to replace lost textbooks.

The School Governing Body is obliged to ensure that textbooks and school stationery are given to all learners at the school without fail. No learner may be denied textbooks or stationery on the basis that his/her parent has not met certain conditions of the school.

The SGB, through the principal should declare excess books to the Circuit Manager and should find it easy to release excess textbooks to other schools with shortages when requested to do so

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Programme Director, the Department conducted an Internal Audit which looked at financial management of schools, governance, infrastructure and school safety.

The report revealed non-compliance with laws, regulations, policies and frame works.

It laments the state of incapacity of SGB's on finance and management which resulted in some principals and SGBs charged with misconduct and fraud.

To address this state of affairs, it will be imperative for every Schools Governing Body to develop its **School Development Plans** for the next three years.

The School Development Plans just like the strategic plan of any institution will detail the extent to which the SGB will operate and achieve performance targets.

The Department will assist with the guidelines for the development of these plans after it has consulted with the Associations of School Governing Bodies.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

I request that you must ensure that the process of handover and the changing of financial signatories is done before the end of this month. Where there are challenges, the Circuit Manager should mediate urgently.

All School Governing Bodies should assist in monitoring the services that are rendered in their respective schools e.g. provisioning of the National School Nutrition Programmes, Scholar Transport, retrieval of textbooks, securing school furniture and buildings.

The School Governing Bodies must ensure compliance to government pronouncements and help in eradicating social ills such as teenage pregnancy.

Please ensure that all learners receive what it's due to them and refrain from withholding report cards from learners because that is against the law.

Let the policy of NO- Fee- Schools be implemented to the latter.

Let's work towards ensuring that schools are not disrupted by the community service delivery protests.

Appreciation

I wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the leadership of the associations of school governing bodies and to all institutions that continue to support the delivery of quality education.

Equally, we wish to congratulate the newly elected members of the School Governing Bodies. You have been appointed to serve this nation at this front. You are not the opposition party but a major stakeholder to advance the delivery of education.

We are embracing an open door policy, like we always say our doors are at all times open.

Lastly, we request to use the opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who served in the previous term especially those who were not re-elected for the contribution they have made during their term. Thank you so much.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The Department will conduct an intensive training from 20 June to the end of October 2015.

The training will focus the following modules:

Democratic Governance, Conduct Effective Meetings, Financial Management, Policy Development, Interviewing Skills, Supply Chain Management and Code of Conduct.

The Department has appointed a service provider that will conduct this training and to table a report.

I request that members of School Governing Bodies to attend the training sessions without fail.

JUNE MONTH PROGRAMMES

Programme Director, we are mindful that had it not been the struggle that was waged by students in 1976, this country would not be where it is today.

In this context, we are obliged to work around the clock to leverage issues aimed at empowering our youth.

We must not take kindly when we see the youth idle on the streets because that signal our failure.

The Provincial Government will be mounting a number of activities aimed at achieving this. I request that you support these programmes.

CONCLUSION

I wish to conclude by quoting the words from our founding father of democracy, the late Dr. Nelson Mandela who said;

“Man’s goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished. We took up the struggle with our eyes open, under no illusion that the path would be an easy one.

... for myself I have never regretted my commitment to the struggle, and I was always prepared to face the hardship that affected me personally”.

On that note I wish to congratulate you once more and to reiterate our undivided support and at the same time wish you the best on the responsibility that you have taken.

Ngiyabonga