

**Speaking Notes by the MEC for Education for the occasion of the
Celebration of Mandela Month at Vaal River Special School on 16 July
2015**

Programme Director and Deputy Director General, Mrs. Lucy Moyane

Executive Mayor of Lekwa Local Municipality; Cllr Matsidiso Morajane

Rev PA Matsi

Chairperson of the School Governing Body; Mr. KW Kirsten

District Director of Gert Sibande; Mr. PP Magagula

Members of Senior Management

Principal of Vaal River Special School;

Circuit Manager, Mrs. Ndlovu

Representatives of different structures and organisations

Parents

Educators

Sanibonani

Let me thank everyone who graced this occasion in particular the Executive Mayor for welcoming us in her area of influence. Siyabonga Mamawethu.

Without singling out individuals I feel obliged to thank the chairperson of the school governing body for all the hospitality granted to us by the school.

We are aware that coordination was not easy, since the event takes place during school holidays but you made an effort to be with us.

Tribute to Nelson Mandela

Equally significant is that today's event takes place two days before the world marks the 6th Nelson Mandela International Day.

The Mandela Day is a celebration of one of our own, the son of the soil; "the greatest liberator of the 20th century".

Madiba's passion for education knew no bounds as he comprehended education to be foundational to the success of country.

Because of Madiba we now know that it is only through education alone that the country and the people of the world can free themselves from the inter-generational chains of poverty.

I am of the view that because we understand the suffering that Madiba went through, we should do everything and anything, to reciprocate by living up to His wishes of creating a caring, humane and patriotic South Africa.

We must at all times extend a helping hand to those who are needy whose only hope of survival is from people's generosity.

Programmes of Department

The Department will join the people of the world in appreciating the love that Madiba had for us by embarking on a number of initiatives that requires full support of our communities.

These initiatives include the promotion of reading, support to Special Schools, intensification of the Rhanza XiKolo Xa Wena Campaign and the official handing over the State of the Art Schools.

This is in keeping to the injunction by the President of the Republic, Mr. Jacob Zuma that the country should use 67 minutes of their time to extend a helping hand to the needy in honor of the struggle that our Icon, the late President Nelson Mandela had to endure to free the people of South Africa.

Equally the Department will collaborate with a number of local municipalities, as we are doing today, this will include structures and organisations including business institutions towards the leverage of values that Madiba stood for.

Mandela Foundation and Shutter and Shooter will donate books to be handed over to schools, Absa will donate school shoes to needy learners, and Vodacom will donate food packs to five identified schools and the National Youth Development Agency will support the event through the donation of a mobile science lab and sanitary towels.(Subject to the Deputy Chair Approval)

Our son of the soil Mr. Richard Mabaso will lead a cohort of Chief Executive Officers of various businesses to climb Mount Kilimanjaro on 18 July 2015 to raise proceeds to promote the Caring4Girls programme.

This is through the support of Mandela Foundation and the Banking Association South Africa. The Mpumalanga Department of Education was the first government institution to endorse this programme and it is comforted to see it growing in leaps and bounds.

Reading Campaign

The Department in collaboration with Mandela Foundation, Shutter and Shooter and Mpumalanga Writers Associations will embark on a number of activities to promote reading.

This initiative will be officially unveiled on **21 July 2015** at the occasion of the Welcome Ceremony of the Trek4Mandela Mount Kilimanjaro Climbers which will take place at Cyril Clark Secondary School in Mbombela Local Municipality.

The reading campaign activities will include but not be limited to the following:

- Establishment of the MEC Mhaule Book Club
- Official handover of Libraries
- Donation of Books
- Returning of School Books
- Celebration of the International Literacy Day

Establishment of the MEC Mhaule Book Club

On 21 July 2015, I will officially launch the MEC Mhaule Book Club.

I will prescribe 6 to 7 books to read from the 21 July until 08 September 2015. Some of these books will be in IsiNdebele and IsiSwati in keeping to our quest to promote indigenous languages. One book will be in braille to support people living with disabilities.

Membership to this club is voluntary and shall consist of personalities across all spectrums and will be expected to dedicate at least 30 minutes each day towards reading.

In addition, members will post their reading experience and knowledge gained on the special WhatsApp page and on the Departmental website.

The target is to have **67** members fully participating by 08 September 2015. I look forward to interacting with you.

Official Handover of Libraries

The Departments of Education and Culture, Sport and Recreation collaborating with the Department of Basic Education, Shutter and Shooter will officially handover **06** libraries and donate books to **07** schools between the 21st July to 08th September 2015.

This endeavor will include the donation of e- book license to the four boarding schools for five years by Shutter and Shooter.

We are very grateful for the level of support that we have received from Shutter and Shooter.

Donation of Books

Allow me to take this opportunity to encourage all communities to donate books which will be taken to different communities and school libraries.

It is important that as different communities, we appreciate the value of reading, and start embracing our community libraries. Libraries are hubs of knowledge.

We need to encourage our children to go out visit their community libraries, this is not only important for the growth of their minds, but will discourage the unhealthy habit of staying indoors and only watching television.

The Department of Education and the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation will lead this campaign however; The Nelson Mandela Foundation will donate drop boxes that will be positioned in a number of strategic places to ensure easy access.

Please use these drop boxes, every book dropped in there will make a huge difference.

We also encourage all former students to return books to their previous school, so that they could be reused.

Celebration of the International literacy Day

On 08 September 2015 we celebrate International literacy Day, a day that seeks to remind our communities of the importance of literacy.

Literacy is a cause for celebration since there are now close to four billion literate people in the world. However, literacy for all – children, youth and adults, is still an unaccomplished goal and an ever moving target.

The government having launched the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy campaign in February 2008, has helped a number of a people become literate and numerate in one of the eleven official languages.

Let us encourage everyone regardless of their age and circumstances to go back to school, as education is the key to success. Celebrate this day by ensuring that you inspire one person to go back to school.

The Importance of Special Schools

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.

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.

We are therefore very inspired when we witness an occasion of this measure take place in one of our special schools, as we handover the newly built welding and metal workshop to this school. It might seem as a simple gesture for us, but for the lives of the children who depend on this school for life skills and development it is very much appreciated.

I am very grateful for everyone who has ensured that this is possible.

Conclusion

I am truly encouraged by the support we have received in keeping to the Call of the President of the Republic, Mr. Jacob Zuma that the country should use 67 minutes to extend a helping hand to the needy.

My request therefore to each and everyone present here, is that we do not always wait for the month of July to extend a helping hand, but we ensure that the nature of giving is instilled in our lives, and remains a part of us.

Ngiyabonga.