

**Speech delivered at the occasion of the Announcement of the 2015
Grade 12 Results by MEC Reginah Mhaule on 06 January 2016 at
Izimbali Boarding School**

Programme Director and Head of Department, Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane

My Colleagues in the Executive and Public Representatives present

Distinguished Guests

Representatives from the Media

Members of the Community who are listening on various media platforms

Sanibonani and Compliments of the New Season

We are honored by your presence today which in essence confirms that we are not alone in our endeavour to deliver quality education to all the people of the province, *The Place of the Rising Sun*.

Our founding progressive framework- “The Freedom Charter” which we just celebrated 60 years of its existence in 2015 proclaims that:

“The doors of learning and Culture shall be opened...”

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood.”

It is this affirmation that propels us to do everything possible to improve the delivery of quality education in the province,

The Department made significant strides in a number of fronts to enhance the teaching and learning practice since 2009.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In the quest to lay a solid foundation for the sustenance of the improvement of Education, the Department improved access to Early Childhood Development Services. The Class of 2015 is a beneficiary of the ECD programme implemented in the sector since 2001.

It is encouraging to see that our people are taking advantage of this programme by sending their children to the ECD Centres in great numbers. Of significance is that already the ECD Programme is already yielding positive results.

In 2015 the Department established the Early Childhood Development Institute (ECDI) which is located in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in a quest to further invest in the sector and to improve the provisioning of quality of education.

The institute's mandate is to amongst others to conduct research, train Early Childhood Development (ECD) Practitioners and develop material development.

So far **135** practitioners were trained on Basic Child Care, **800** level one and **200** level four practitioners are undergoing training in 2015 which is a good indication of our commitment in this regard.

The Department also took a decision to translate ECD Practitioners who meet the REQV 13 requirement to be employed as teachers in keeping to the prescripts of the Employment of Educators Act.

We will continue to supporting our practitioners to attain the required qualifications and progressively implementing the translation until all our ECD Practitioners are accordingly employed.

BOARDING SCHOOLS

Programme Director, in keeping to the constitutional imperatives of ensuring access to quality education for all, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government established state of the art Boarding Schools to take care of learners who were taught in multigrade schools, child headed families and those that are considered vulnerable.

In this regard, in 2015, the Department operationalized the fourth State of the Art Boarding School namely Emakhazeni Boarding School. This year 2016 will see the operationalization of the fifth boarding schools at Steve Tshwete Local Municipality when schools reopen for the second quarter.

So far there are **3 208** children that are accessing quality education in these facilities.

This is another good story to tell and we are happy that this came to fruition in our lifetime. I hope you all agree that these boarding schools constitute a profound legacy and are the pride of our democratic dispensation.

In addition, the Department constructed state of the art schools and there were some schools which were built and handed over to the department by Big Business, something we really commend.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all business institutions which supported the improvement of school infrastructure. Their patriotic contribution does not go unnoticed.

We appreciate this because we share a view that improved school infrastructure does to a greater extent add impetus in the improvement of scholastic outcomes as it creates an enabling environment for teaching and

learning . The following are some of the schools which were handed over to communities in 2015.

- Acorn to Oaks in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality
- Frank Maghinyana Secondary School in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality
- Nederland Park Secondary School in Msukaligwa Local Municipality
- Makause Secondary School at Emalahleni Local Municipality
- Phelwane Primary School at Thembisile Hani Local Municipality
- Sibongamandla Secondary School at Emalahleni Local Municipality
- Ngema Primary School and
- Injabulo Secondary School both at Mkhondo local Municipality

READING CAMPAIGN

Programme Director, the Department launched a **Reading Campaign** that included the establishment of the MEC's Book Club and the Celebration of the International Literacy Day collaborating with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Banking Association South Africa, the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation and the Mpumalanga Writers Association.

We strongly believe that if our communities can in the true sense of the word embrace reading, we will continue to better the performance of our learners.

I have directed that a programme that will accelerate the implementation of the reading campaign be developed as a matter of urgency and to ensure that all community structures are properly involved in this drive.

Now the moment that you are waiting for:

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Programme Director, the total number of full time learners who wrote the 2015 Grade 12 Examination is **54 980** and of this number **43 229** passed which translate to **7 614** more learners passing compared to 2014. Looking at the trends, it is the first time that Mpumalanga Province passes such a huge number of learners, something we need to commend.

On that score, it gives me pleasure to announce that the grade 12 class of 2015 has achieved a 78.6% pass rate.

Programme Director this pass rate constitutes a decline of 0.4% from the **79%** pass rate obtained in 2014.

This decline presents an awakening call for us to instill a sense of urgency and not to be complacent in our quest to deliver quality education in the province.

It is a clarion call to every stakeholder to put more effort on the paddle until the province achieves the results that have been envisioned in the National Development Plan.

DISTRICTS

Of the four districts in the province, Ehlanzeni has recorded the highest pass rate, obtaining 82.39% in 2015 compared to the 82.28% in 2014.

Nkangala district obtained 81.67% which is an improvement from the 78.92% obtained in 2014. I wish to commend Nkangala District for this 2.75% improvement.

Bohlabela District obtained 76.71% compared to 76.77% obtained in 2014 and

Gert Sibande District obtained 72.62% compared to 77.24% in 2014

All these Districts though some realized a percentage decline, have passed more learners compared to the previous years. What is encouraging is that all our districts are performing above 72% and are above the National Average.

CIRCUITS PERFORMANCE

Of the **68** circuits within the province, Khulangwane Circuit from Ehlanzeni district is the overall best performing circuit after obtaining a 92.82% pass rate in 2015. This is an improvement from 89.2% obtained in 2014. I request that we congratulate this achievement. Siyabonga Mrs. Khoza and your team.

29 circuits performed between 80% and 100% and 35 performed above **60%** but below **80% and only four** 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 2016 no single circuit will perform below **70%**.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Of the **545** schools, 24 obtained **100%** pass rate.

237 schools performed at **80%** and above but did not manage to reach 100%.

149 performed above **60%** but below **80%**.

Hoërskool Nelspruit retained the number one position provincially for the 2015 academic year with a 100% pass rate. The school enrolled and passed all 251 learners.

Again the school that obtained the most distinctions is Hoërskool Nelspruit with a total of 432 distinctions.

Hoërskool Nelspruit is the school obtaining the highest number of Bachelors with 213 out of the 251 candidates that sat for the examinations. We wish to congratulate Dr Swanepoel and his staff for this outstanding performance.

I wish to also congratulate all principals and their teams for doing us proud.

Be that as it may, we have observed with great concern that some of our schools have registered huge and unacceptable declines in their performance.

Although we had directed that there should no school obtaining below 60% in 2015, **70** schools are still trapped in that category. Principals of these schools must as we speak prepare convincing motivations on why they should be retained in their positions.

SUBJECT PERFORMANCE

Of the eleven high enrolment subjects, six have registered improvement in performance. These are, Accounting, Agricultural Science, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences and English First Additional Language.

The Department is doing everything possible to ensure that the number of learners that are taking Mathematics and Physical Science increase.

In this regard, we are encouraged that in 2015, there were more learners who wrote and passed Mathematics and Physical Science. **11 441** learners representing **55,5%** and **10 981** learners representing **62.6%** passed Mathematics and Physical Science respectively. This means **1 391** more learners for Mathematics and **2 060** more learners passing Physical Science than in 2014. This is commendable.

Again, ten schools were able to pass 50 and more learners at 50% and above in Mathematics and Seven Schools were able to pass 50 and more learners at 50% and above.

We have recorded one school namely Hoërskool Nelspruit that passed more than 100 learners at 50% and more in Mathematics.

Programme Director, It gives me pleasure to announce that all systems are now in place to ensure that the 101 designated schools in the province will from 2016 onwards offer Mathematics and Physical Science from Grades 10 to 12 as compulsory subjects to all learners.

These schools will be supported through the already established Maths, Science and Technology Academy that is located at Emalahleni Local Municipality.

Teachers have been trained and the required infrastructure has been installed in these schools and to their primary feeder schools. We will continue resourcing them so that they attain the highest levels of technology enhanced teaching.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the leadership of South 32 for ensuring that the hub of the Academy is fully functional in 2016.

CREDIBILITY OF THE RESULTS

I wish to state categorically that the results I have just announced are reliable and credible following an intense well managed examination process.

In fact, I wish to say it without any fear of contradiction that for six years in succession, Mpumalanga Province managed an incident free, valid, fair and credible examination process.

What is being said regarding the 2015 examination is that there are allegations that there were examination question paper/s that leaked in another province and that the law enforcement agencies are investigating if that did not spill over to other provinces and in our case there are three suspected learners who are being investigated.

This does not in anyway suggest that there were leakages in the province.

Furthermore, during the marking of the scripts, our markers picked up patterns of responses from candidates which raised suspicions of possible assistance or group copying. These cases were accordingly reported to both DBE and Umalusi. I am happy to indicate that the Provincial Examinations Irregularities Committee has begun investigating these and some of the seven cases reported have already been cleared.

I am very grateful for the work done by our teachers, including invigilators, markers, examination assistants, officials and all stakeholders that supported us to run this examination in this outstanding manner. Our partners, the South African Police Service and other security agencies, we cannot thank you enough.

CONGRATULATE THE CLASS OF 2015

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the class of 2015 for this achievement. Equally, I wish to profoundly thank our beloved teachers for the good work done. It is clear that if we continue to support our teachers a lot of good will see the light of day.

We are equally grateful for the support we have received from our stakeholders, from the teacher unions, religious fraternity, sister departments, non-governmental organizations, business fraternity and to all organizations and individual persons who support the department.

We are aware that without your support our course was going to face serious impediments.

I still wish to emphasize to our principals and circuit managers that learners who are repeating for the first time must be admitted without fail in all our schools. We have been preaching this over the past few years to ensure that these learners are given a second chance. I hope that everyone will appreciate that this does not need to be re-emphasized.

SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATIONS

Equally, learners who qualify to write the supplementary examination must be assisted by our schools.

The Department will support these learners through direct teaching and revision Classes, Radio Lessons and the Dial a Tutor Programmes focusing on high enrolment content subjects.

The centers that were used previously for winter schools will be used as Support Centers for learners who will be writing the supplementary examination.

We urge all qualifying learners to register for the support programme in their respective schools by 12 January 2016 so that classes can commence from 17 January 2016 in the afternoons.

The Supplementary examinations will take place from 10 February to 17 March 2016. These are critical because learners that need to pass one or two subjects in order to make the grade are accorded that opportunity.

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) Time Table for 2016 has already been circulated to all schools and posted on the departmental social media platforms.

I request parents and teachers to make it their business to support all learners who qualify to write the supplementary examination. At the same time learners are urged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Furthermore the department will participate in a pilot programme called “Second chance matric re-write programme” which will take place in Nkangala and Bohlabela Districts.

In 2015, the Mpumalanga Province implemented a school based learner performance improvement programme. As part of this, schools were required to develop and ensure the implementation of their own intervention programmes. This is very good because the school community gets involved in the affairs of their respective schools. We urge schools to do the same in 2016.

In addition, the Department has already developed a system wide learner performance improvement plan for 2016. Today's results will inform the finalization of this plan and our partners will be apprised accordingly. It is our hope that the Class of 2016 will take advantage of this programme.

SUPPORT TO LEARNERS

The department has set aside **R104 million** towards bursaries for 2016/17. These will be issued to deserving learners in keeping to the Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy.

The Mpumalanga Government bursary caters for tuition fees, accommodation, stationery, meals and provides for monthly pocket money.

Again we confirm that all our top ten candidates will automatically receive a full bursary from the Department and learners with disabilities will be given the first priority.

We are encouraged by institutions and business that support and contribute by giving bursaries to deserving students.

All successful students will receive notifications during the second week of February 2016.

Programme Director, I wish to take this time and read the Congratulatory MESSAGE FROM THE HON PREMIER TO THE CLASS OF 2015

As a people of Mpumalanga, the Place of the Rising Sun, we have an understanding that every household is touched by the developments and happenings in the education system.

Education makes a worthy contribution to the lives of every nation and society and has immensely improved our ways of understanding the world and mainly making us responsible citizens.

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government congratulates all candidates who have made the grade and wishes them all the best in their prospective fields of study as well as other developmental endeavours they wish to pursue.

To that effect, the Provincial Government has issued bursaries to deserving learners and also expresses its gratitude to the business sector for coming to the party by easing the financial burden of our citizens in the form of offering bursaries and other stipends.

The doors of learning have opened up all over the nation and the University of Mpumalanga will also be expanding courses on offer in the 2016 academic year. We thus want to encourage our learners to enroll with the University of Mpumalanga and be counted amongst the first to be enrolled.

To those learners who will be going beyond the boundaries of the province, please be informed that you have our support and best wishes. The people of Mpumalanga are proud of you, go and represent us well in your endeavour to acquire knowledge and skills.

Those who have not made it still have a chance to change their fortunes. There is still hope for you to also pass your Grade 12. We thus appeal to the Department of Education, principals and parents to offer their support so that these learners can also find their academic footing.

It is also proper that I should extend and appreciate the efforts of all our learners, parents, teachers, government officials, organisations and

other persons who have contributed to the success of these Grade 12 learners.

Our wish is that the education that our learners acquire should be used as a frontline in fighting social ills and pushing the boundaries of social movement, change and development.

Congratulations Class of 2015

MEC SPECIAL AWARDS

Programme Director, every year at this occasion I take the time to express our appreciation to citizens of Mpumalanga Province who made a mark on the national and world stage thereby raising the flag of Mpumalanga province high.

These are citizens who had the courage “to walk on stormy waters, who stood on the pedestal of the highest mountains” to the delight of the province and the country at large. They are randomly selected and I request the Gert Sibande District Mayor, Cllr Nhlabathi and the Executive Mayor of Mkhondo Local Municipality to assist me on the stage as we grant the 2016 MEC Special Awards:

MS. ROLENE STRAUSS

I take this opportunity to recognise the sterling achievement of the daughter of the soil and one of the most beautiful girls in the whole world, **Ms. Rolene Strauss**, a renowned South African model and beauty queen who was crowned Miss South Africa 2014 and went on to win the Miss World title in London.

She is the second South African woman to win the Miss World pageant, but the third to hold the title. Rolene Strauss is a medical student at the University of the Free State. She was born in Volksrust, Mpumalanga Province.

In the year 2000, at 8 years of age, Rolene Strauss witnessed the crowning of Jo-Ann Strauss (no relation) as Miss SA. She dreamed of winning the title herself, and she did so in 2014.

That confirmed that dreams do come true only if we dedicate ourselves and work hard. She is a true role model to all our girls as she has demonstrated both beauty and brains. Her passion is on health women and education.

Indeed, she has taken Mpumalanga Province to greater heights. I therefore request Ms. Rolene Strauss to receive the token of appreciation from the Department of Education.

MRS. NORAH FAKUDE-NKUNA

Mrs. Norah Fakude-Nkuna is an outstanding business woman who has successfully disobeyed the notion that a place of a woman is in the kitchen. She has achieved a lot within the business front and currently she sits in a number of Boards including being the Chairperson of the Executive Board of Buscor.

Her business acumen has earned her respect within and outside this country.

Mrs Fakude-Nkuna led from the front in support of education delivery in the province.

I feel humbled to bestow this honor to the daughter of our soil, Mrs. Norah Fakude- Nkuna.

SIBUSISO VILANE

Sibusiso Vilane is a son of the soil, an adventurer, motivational speaker, and the author of the book *To the Top from Nowhere*.

He is the first black African to climb the world's highest peak, Mount Everest a feat he achieved in 2005. He ultimately did this twice through two different routes.

In 2006, Vilane was awarded the Order of Ikhamanga (Bronze) by the President of the Republic, former President Mbeki who said:

"In this, Sibusiso has shown the heights we can all scale in life if we put our shoulder to the wheel and work at things without flagging. Sibusiso, you have done us proud!"

On 18 July 2015, Sibusiso successfully led a team of CEOs and Celebrities to the highest Mountain in Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro in the quest to keep a girl child at school.

It is for this reason that I felt obliged to recognize his patriotic character with the hope that our children will learn a lesson or two from his courage.

People of Mpumalanga here is your son, let us embrace him as I bestow this honor upon him.

PRETTY YENDE

Pretty Yende sings melodies that positively penetrate hearts and souls bringing profound memories that transcend barriers of language and she is riding the crest of the opera wave.

Pretty is from the dusty streets of this neighborhood (Thandukukhanya, Mkhondo Local Municipality) and her exquisite performances have received standing ovations on the world's most famous opera stages. She was voted one of South Africa's most successful women, as well as South African Cosmopolitan's Fun and Fearless Female.

In 2010, she won the first prize at the Vincenzo Bellini International Competition; and in 2011, Yende took the first prize as well as the Audience Favourite prize at Operalia, the World Opera Competition.

She is the first recipient of the Khabi Mngoma Award from the Old Mutual and Telkom National Choir Festival, and the youngest recipient of the Golden Arc (Arca D'oro) from the jury of Italian critics.

In 2012, she sang the role of Musetta in Giacomo Puccini's 1896 opera La bohème at La Scala in Milan.

Early this year, she made her American debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York performing the main role of Countess Adele in Rossini's Opera, Le Comte Ory. Yende earned great acclaim for this role by the New York Times, as she learnt the role in a week. She repeated the same role in Vienna a few days after her American success.

She is the pride of the "Place of the Rising Sun" and befitting the honour that we as the people of Mpumalanga accord her today.

Ladies and gentlemen, I feel privileged to request the parents of Pretty Yende to come on stage to receive this award on behalf of their daughter.

MR. JZM SAMBO

I personally regard him as the father of musical prowess who has travelled the length and breadth of this country and the world to unearth musical talent.

Mr. JZM Sambo “the intentional acclaimed Master of Ceremonies”, was a teacher, a principal, chief youth organizer, and inspector of schools, a circuit manager and a Head of protocol in the Office of the MEC of Education in 1994.

He is an embodiment of all musical renditions and is currently an award recipient of the Professor Khabi Mngoma Musical Award.

He is known for his profound well-articulated mastery of the disciplines of choral festivals.

I therefore take this time and request that he be granted a standing ovation as we bestow this honour upon him.

Thank you very much; this confirms that Mpumalanga has an abundance of talent and true role models. It is my hope that our children will recognize this and wish to emulate these personalities.

STATE OF READINESS FOR 2016

Programme Director, Our collective view is that to improve the results of 2016 we must ensure that teaching and learning starts on the first day of school reopening (i.e. 13 January 2016).

The department has done its part; learning and teaching support material as ordered by schools was delivered to all our schools by the end of November

2015. All schools have received their paper budgets and post establishments for 2016.

Temporary teachers who served more than two years were made permanent in keeping to the Education Labour Relations Council Resolution no 1 of 2015.

School furniture was delivered in 2015 in line with the orders which were placed by schools.

The Department's teacher –pupil - ratio is favorable at 1: 30 as such we do not expect any learner to be without a teacher in front of them.

There are **five new** schools that are going to be operationalised in 2016 in line with our endeavour to ensure that there are adequate schools for all our children.

I take this time to request all our communities and the youth formations within the province to volunteer their time and skills to visit the schools within their localities from tomorrow to clean, cut grass, organize furniture so that when schools re-open on 13th January teaching and learning starts immediately. This is in keeping with our Rhandza Xikolo Xa Wena Campaign. We urge School Governing bodies to coordinate these.

Together with the Executive Mayor of Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, Cllr Mashigo and with students of the Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT), I will be at Shakwaneng Primary School and Kadishi Secondary School in Matibidi on 11 January 2016 to do the same. We invite the community of Matibidi to join us.

APPRECIATION

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the African National Congress for granting me the opportunity and bestowing on me the responsibility of oversight on this department. In particular, I am indebted to the Honourable Premier, Mr. DD Mabuza for his undivided support to me and the department.

I also wish to thank the Portfolio Committee on Education under the stewardship of Honourable Mr. Speedy Mashilo for their guidance and oversight.

The Educator Unions and the leadership of the Associations of School Governing Bodies have supported the department throughout, and I am grateful.

The business community that rallied side by side the department in times of need is being acknowledged and appreciated.

I equally salute the non-governmental organizations, sister departments institutions such as the Banking Association South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Foundation thank you so much for you kind support. The Chief Executive of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Mr. Sello Hatang has graced this occasion and is hereby acknowledged.

We must not stop to thank our teachers for their hard work because if it were not of them we were not going to be telling this good story. Ngiyabonga Kakhulu.

To the leadership of the security cluster and the provincial SAPS in particular thank very much for making this examination your number one project.

The media has supported this department in a big way since, in particular Ligwalagwla FM, Ikwewezi FM, Ukhozi FM and our provincial Community Radio stations and the print media, thank you so much.

Let me take this time to thank my family and the Moral Regeneration Movement under the Chairmanship of Rev MM Nthali and the whole religious fraternity for the support to the department. Your prayers are pulling us through always.

Lastly, I wish to thank all officials of the department under the capable leadership of the Head of Department, Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane for dedication and commitment to the task. Ngiyanibonga Kakhulu.

To all who sponsored this event, your patriotic benevolence does not go unnoticed.

The founding father of our democracy, the late Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela once said:

“Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul, and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.”

I wish you all a glorious and prosperous 2016, once more congratulations to the class of 2015.

Ngiyabonga