

**Speech to be Delivered by the MEC for Education, Mr. Bonakele Majuba at the Occasion of the Meeting with School Governing Bodies of Ehlanzeni and Bohlabela District at the Communion Church in the City of Mbombela Local Municipality on 09 January 2024**

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Programme Director and Head: Education, Mrs. Lucy Moyane

Leadership of the Education Sector Stakeholders

Chairpersons of the School Governing Bodies

Members of the School Governing Bodies

District Management Teams

Principals

Circuit Managers

**Sanibonani.**

Thank you very much for honouring our invitation as we start the new year. Please allow me to wish you all the best for the year 2024 and hope that this year will be a productive year for the education sector and all of us.

We meet at a crucial time in the history of our nation as this week marks 112 anniversary for the African National Congress which spearheaded the liberation struggle and the ushering in of freedom for Africans and blacks in particular in our beloved country of South Africa.

It is an undisputable fact that all eyes are on Mpumalanga now as all heads of government nationally and in the other provinces will descend to the Province of the Rising Sun to partake in the birthday day celebration of the African National Congress.

We have thus deemed it ideal that we convene this gathering early in the beginning of the academic year and we are grateful that you have come in your numbers to grace this meeting even though it is still school holidays.

The late Former President Nelson Mandela driven by his love for children, education and human development once said, “It is not beyond our power to create a world in which all children have access to a good education. Those who do not believe this have small imaginations.”

As we begin the 2024 school calendar, we wish to pledge our unwavering commitment to a collective quest to better the delivery of quality learning and teaching within the Province - the Place of the Rising Sun.

With only a few days left before schools re-open their doors of teaching and learning and welcoming more than a **million learners** from grades R to 12 in our Province, it remains imperative that we assure the citizenry of Mpumalanga that everything humanly possible has been done to ensure a seamless start of the 2024 academic year.

To this end, the Department has already issued the post establishment for the 2024 school year which details the total number of teachers which will be in our schools this year.

The posts establishments were circulated to schools before the end of 2023.

This was intended to ensure that there must be a teacher for every class and each subject offered in all schools.

The Department appreciates the active collaboration with teacher unions which enabled the smooth placement of teachers who were in excess in the 2023.

This process has assisted in translating teachers from temporary teachers into permanent appointments.

In the 2023 vacancy list, **362** promotional posts have been filled and **332** are outstanding which include **20** Principals, **71** Deputy Principals and **241** Departmental Heads.

### **School Paper Budgets**

I am quite aware that you are interested in the human resource and financial wellbeing of your schools. To this end, the Department has already issued the post establishment for the 2024 school year which details the total number of teachers which will be in our schools this year.

The Schools Paper Budgets were also determined last year and were submitted to schools on time to enable them (schools) to make proper planning and to timeously communicate budgetary related commitments with parents.

All public ordinary schools received their second tranche allocations in November 2023.

Paper budgets are intended for matters like payment of Telephone Accounts, Office Stationery, Consumables, Toiletries, Municipal Services and day-to-day maintenance to mention just a few.

**Early Childhood Development Centres** received their 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter allocation during the month of November and December 2023.

Some ECD centres experienced delays in the payment due to challenges relating to proper submission of banking details that are not active on **Central Supply Database**.

The centres that are affected are being assisted to finalize these matters to enable transfers.

### **Learning and Teaching Support Material**

Learning and Teaching Support Material was distributed late last year to schools.

Further distribution is being done this week to those schools which did not receive their consignments. The intention is that all schools must receive stationery before they re-open for 2024.

Schools are expected to equally hand over the stationery and learning support material to all learners before **15 January 2024** to enable teaching and learning to start in earnest from the first period of the first day of school re-opening.

This distribution includes stationery, workbooks, and stationery for new schools or grades of special schools and e-learning.

It is therefore an obligation of every public ordinary school principal to ensure that every learner receives their requisite stationery.

There must be no instance where stationery is not provided to learners by schools within our Province.

The view of the Department is that the stationery has been assessed and is adequate to enable learning and teaching throughout the year.

**To this end**, there must be no instance where parents are going to be compelled to dig deep into their pockets to add to the already provided stationery. This applies mainly to the No School Fees, quintiles 1 to 3 within the Province.

The No Fee Schools receives a subsidy from the Department to enable them to buy additional resources for day to day running.

It is therefore not justifiable for some of the No Fee Schools to demand parents to pay for certain resources.

The budgets of these schools need to be managed in such a way that parents are truly relieved from paying for the day to day running of the schools.

Members of School Governing Bodies are urged to consider the plight of parents at all times.

### **Retrieval of Tablets and Textbooks**

The Ubuhlebuzile e-Learning Tablets which were given to the 2023 Grade 12 learners remain a property of the Mpumalanga Department of Education and as such they were supposed to be returned before schools closed for the December Festive Holidays.

Schools were expected to enforce their respective retrieval policies to ensure that all learners return every school property in their possession including the tablets.

For tablets not retrieved and where no justifiable reasons are advanced as mentioned above, the principal of the school must

open a case of stolen property against such learner and submit a detailed report to the Department.

The Department has selected **eight (8) Secondary Schools** (two in each District) which will pilot the full implementation of Ubuhlebuzile e-learning programme this year.

In these eight schools, learners from grade eight to 12 will receive tablets which are fully resourced with education supplementary material to enhance teaching and learning.

These tablets were donated to the Department by Statistics South Africa. We sincerely thank **Stats SA** for their patriotic generosity.

As part of this pilot project, I will visit Driekoppies Secondary School in Nkomazi Local Municipality on **Tuesday, 16 January 2024** to monitor the distribution of these tablets to all learners at that school.

Our desire is that there must be a tablet with full educational supplementary material in the hands of each child in the Province in the near future.

Therefore, this pilot will help us to fully understand the implications on the modalities and intricacies involved in the full scale widening of the e-learning programme.

## **Scholar Transport**

The Department, working with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport has already put up plans to transport learners who walk more than five (05) kilometers to reach the first available school within their communities.

Indeed, a school journey is not simply an obligation, but a pathway to empowerment to unleash the potential of each and every child within our Province.

To this end, **353** schools are benefiting from the Scholar Transport programme in **711** routes provided by **137** service providers.

**72,809** learners will be transported this year and this number may increase with the re-opening of schools.

Arrangements are being made to reduce these numbers in the near future by ensuring that learners attend schooling not far from their homes.

## **National School Nutrition**

Programme Director, nourishing the minds and bodies of our learners through the National School Nutrition Programme remains our priority and this year **924 015** learners will benefit from this noble programme.



The Department has provided the necessary training to school food handlers and has issued letters to contracted Service Providers for them to render the services without fail.

This programme goes beyond providing a meal but in empowering learners and parents to adopt healthy lifestyles through education and promoting community-driven initiatives like school vegetable gardens.

School Governing Bodies are urged to seize the opportunity by transforming unused school land into a source of fresh produce while at the same time teaching our learners that the soil is a great resource to fight food scarcity and malnutrition.

They can do so by cultivating vegetable gardens and orchards to enrich the meals provided, address local food insecurity and empower schools to become beacons of sustainability.

Let's work together to nourish our children's minds, bodies, and communities, it is all in our hands.

## **School Infrastructure Improvement**

We are on course to provide adequate school infrastructure for teaching and learning to take place within the national norms and standards as espoused in our mandate.

To this effect a number of schools were given facelifts last year as part of the process to improve school infrastructure in the Province.

The process to finalize the construction of new schools is being accelerated in an effort to create adequate space for learners to learn and teachers to teach.

The storm damaged schools are also given the utmost attention and will be fixed

Programme Director, our main concern is the rate at which schools are vandalized, broken into and school property being stolen and damaged by some community members.

This is taking the Department far backwards in its quest to improve the delivery of school infrastructure.

We must continue to work together to mobilize our communities to be the first and the last line of defense to curb this challenge.

The Department has intensified the Rhandza Xikolo Xa Wena Campaign as another way to address this problem.

Equally, the Rhandza Xikolo Xa Wena Campaign advocates for schools to be kept crystal clean at all times through its pillar of the Cleanest School Programme.

School Governing Bodies will be expected this year as well to embrace this programme by making it their responsibility that

schools are free from litter, drugs, corporal punishment, crime, bullying and other forms of social ills to remain centres of teaching and learning excellence as part of the Rhandza Xikolo Xa Wena Campaign.

## **Admission of Learners**

The admission of learners for 2024 school year commenced in May 2023.

We are encouraged that a huge number of learners have already been admitted in our schools already.

Every effort was made by the Department to ensure that learners of school going age are admitted in schools within the Province in keeping to our country's constitutional mandate.

Admission Committees were established in each district and are at work to facilitate this process and to work collaboratively with principals, School Governing Bodies and parents.

So far, we are pleased with the levels of co-operation between parents and schools and we wish that this must continue up to a point where every child of school going age is in class learning.

To this end, we are aware that there are still parents, especially in the fast growing towns such as Emalahleni, Ermelo, Mbombela,

Mashishing, Steve Tshwete and Secunda which still have learners in admission waiting lists.

The Department is making the necessary interventions in this regard to ensure that a process of admitting these learners is accelerated.

At Emalahleni, the Department will operationalize **Mokibe Primary School and Siyanqoba Primary and Secondary School.**

**Mokibe Primary School** was temporarily housed at Bonginsimbi Technical High School and now that they are moving to their new location which means that there may be adequate classrooms to accommodate more learners in Bonginsimbi Technical High School.

The Department is truly grateful and appreciates the visionary leadership of Africoal Mining Company for the donations of Mobile Classrooms and support as well as the Emalahleni Local Municipality towards the successful relocation of Mokibe Primary School to its new location.

There are also a number of interventions that are being made in the other areas to ensure that learners are in class learning.

## **Announcement of the 2023 Grade 12 Results**

The National Senior Examination Results of the 2023 Grade 12 learners will be issued on Friday, 19 January 2024.

Parents are requested to accompany their children to collect Statements of results from their respective schools.

Equally, Principals are mandated to ensure that all learners receive their Statements of Results.

There must be no instance where results of learners are withheld by schools.

We are aware that this time is heightened by anxiety and anticipation by both learners and parents.

Parents are urged to support their children and not exact unnecessary pressure on them.

Equally, learners must stay positive and know that regardless of the outcome of results, they have all the support from their parents and the Department,

They need to be aware that there are always multiple paths to success, and even if results are not as expected, there are options for retaking exams or exploring alternative routes.

## **Elections of School Governing Bodies**

Programme Director, the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga used Notice 1914 of 2023 to announce the period for the 2024 School Governing Bodies Elections and in that Notice she says:

“I, Angelina Matsie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers hereby announce the period for the 2024 SGB Elections to be from 01 to 31 March 2024 and that the newly elected SGB’s assume their responsibilities the moment they are declared to be freely and fairly elected SGB members.”

I therefore use this opportunity to express our gratitude to all SGB members who have worked well to ensure efficient school governance and to make a clarion call to all members of the school governing bodies to work collaboratively with parents to prepare for the elections in keeping to the dictates of the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1986.

The South African Schools Act mandates all of us to commit by ensuring access to quality education for every child as well as for parents, teachers, and communities to play their vital roles in nurturing young minds and unlocking their full potential.

Together, let us strive to create a conducive environment where teachers can inspire and learners can thrive.

By joining hands and fostering a spirit of collaboration, let us make this year one of the most remarkable learning and shared success experience.

Emphasizing the need and importance of working together, in his New Year message, President Ramaphosa said, “It has always been our greatest strength that we are able to come together in times of difficulty, anchored by our shared commitment to our country.

As long as we remain united, as long as we continue to work together, as long as we are united around our common vision, we will succeed and go farther.

As we look back on the year that has passed and the challenges it has brought, we must look to the future with hope. We must continue to move forward.

We must never lose our courage and we must remain determined to leave no-one behind.”

May 2024 be a year where access to education, leads to productivity, and productivity blossoms into true achievement.

No one must be left behind.

**Ngiyabonga.**