

**REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, SIPHOSEZWE MASANGO,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE
2007 GRADE 12 RESULTS,
AT ZITHABISENI, NKANGALA REGION,
28TH DECEMBER 2007**

Programme Director

Honourable Premier - Mr TSP Makwetla

Members of the Executive Council

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Culture, Sport & Recreation and
Education - Mr Screamer Sikhosana

Colleagues in the Provincial Legislature

Head of Department - Mr M R Tywakadi

His Worship, the Executive Mayor of Nkangala District Municipality – Clr. S K
Mashilo

His Worship, the Executive Mayor of Gert Sibande District Municipality - Clr. A
Gamede

Her Worship, the Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District Municipality Clr. K
Mkhonto

His Worship, the Executive Mayor of Thembisile Municipality - Clr. V V Nkosi

Representatives from the House of Traditional Leaders

Members of the Provincial Examination Board

Members of the Provincial Examination Irregularities Committee

Representatives of Teacher and Learner Formations

Representatives of School Governing Bodies

Members of the Media

Parents here and at home

Learners here and at home

Fellow comrades and compatriots

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning, Lotjhani, Avuxeni, Dumelang!

We are on course to educate the nation!

I feel deeply honoured, proud and privileged to be part of this auspicious occasion.

Today's function epitomizes the climax of the toil and hard work our dear learners had to contend with over the years. Similarly, it constitutes the commencement of a brighter and illustrious future which stands to benefit the whole nation.

In keeping with our maxim: "Making the education enterprise everybody's business", the Department has been able to involve a variety of stakeholders to discuss and deliberate on issues that would contribute to the realization of the kind of an education system that we so gallantly fought for.

The highlight of these interactions include, meetings with stakeholders and a RCL Conference which was attended by learner leaders in Bushbuckridge Region as well as Evening Chats held with school principals, where, amongst others, issues around school safety, effective teaching and learning, stakeholder involvement in education, school governance and visionary leadership were dealt with at length.

It is our considered view that the attainment of a quality public education system which we all yearn for, will only remain a pipedream if stakeholders are left on the sidelines and are made to become spectators on issues that are meant to shape the destiny of the children and that of the country.

In the Policy and Budget Speech I presented to the Provincial Legislature on Tuesday, 29th June, 2004, I urged parents to unashamedly reclaim their role in the education of their children.

We will unapologetically continue making this call to parents, in an effort to ensure that our education system succeeds in producing the kind of a citizen that will be able to contribute to the economic development and growth of our province.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, the availability of resources plays a key role in learner performance but it is not the only variable. As Mpumalanga we can be proud that we are resourcing our schools better, teacher: learner ratios are favourable and we are able to provide at least a textbook in each learner's hand.

I want to congratulate those schools that continue to perform beyond expectations despite limited resources. I have seen schools that even start the day at 06h00 to mitigate the impact of the lack of resources on learning.

Intervention Programmes

The intervention programmes to support underperforming schools were mooted out during the course of this year and they included amongst others the following:

- The development of schools improvement plans that was preceded by the identification of areas for development and programmes that seek to address the challenges.
- The monitoring of the implementation of such plans through on-site visits to assess the progress and challenges in the implementation of the plans.
- The training of principals of underperforming schools in school management to enhance their capacity to effectively manage the institutions and turn the tide of mediocrity into excellence.
- Learner and teacher motivation sessions were held to bolster their morale and dedication in facing their challenges and embracing hardwork and determination as a pathway towards excellence.
- The convening of Niyabonwa Indaba created a platform for the sharing of best practice.

- The filling of critical posts especially in the Bushbuckridge Region was an impetus to strengthen the performance of schools in that particular region, however more still needs to be done in regard to the provisioning of the required resources in schools to enable them to function to their optimum.
- 2008 will witness more concerted efforts of ensuring that schools receive the required resources and support. Schools are however expected to utilize the available resources to their maximum to ensure that they don't sit and wait for the delivery of resources before they put the shoulder to the wheel.

These interventions, Ladies and Gentlemen, have worked differently in different schools.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education entered the year 2007 with a strong academic standing, boasting a **65.3%** pass mark, with a sterling **6.7%** improvement from the previous year's performance.

It is hoped that the results I am about to announce will in no doubt prepare our learners to face new challenges as some of them will be venturing into the world of work, whilst others will be pursuing further education at various institutions of higher learning.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The Class of 2007 was always going to be different from the Class of 2006 on three counts, Firstly due to the border readjustment processes which led to the inclusion of Bushbuckridge into Mpumalanga Province; Secondly due to the impact of the public service strike on teaching and learning and lastly due to the transition between the old and new curricula.

The beginning of 2007 saw the size of Grade 12 enrolments soaring from **39 040** in 2006 to **51 787** in 2007, an increase of **12 747** (32,7%) learners. **28 374** (54.8%) of these are girl learners. Enrolments for Higher Grade Mathematics and Physical science have increased from **2 333** to **4 172** and from **4 458** to **7 250** respectively. Other subjects had massive increases, e.g. learners taking Biblical Studies increased from **390** to **2 534** whilst learners taking Xitsonga increased from **49** to **8 996**. The border readjustments therefore have drastically changed Mpumalanga's establishment, resulting in **336** additional schools, **6 159** additional educators and **190 309** additional learners.

In the majority of schools, the public service strike resulted in a loss of 16 school days, representing **8%** of the total number of school days. Attempts were made to recover the lost teaching and learning time and thanks for the co-operation received from the leadership of various educator unions. The Department would unreservedly like to extend a hearty word of appreciation to all educators, parents and officials whose selfless contribution made the implementation of the Provincial Recovery Plan a huge success.

Programme Director, I want to bring to the attention of this gathering that the Class of 2007, being the transition class; is the last cohort of learners that had to transit from the OBE Curriculum in the GET Band into the NATED 550 and is also the last cohort to present the NATED 550 Curriculum.

It gives me pleasure to announce the 2007 Grade 12 results which were certified by Umalusi on Wednesday the 19th of December, 2007. The results I am presenting today will indicate some areas of improvement as well as some areas that still need our urgent attention and intervention.

These results should be understood within the different contexts our school still find themselves in. They clearly depict two worlds – that of the well-resourced and that of the under-resourced where urban schools continue to perform better because of the availability of resources as compared to rural schools.

HOW THE CLASS OF 2007 PERFORMED

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Class of 2007 has recorded an overall pass rate of **60,8%** as compared to **65,3%** obtained in 2006. This represents a decline of **4,5%**. This decline should be understood in a context of a **32.7 %** increase in learner enrolments. The enrolment of candidates in Grade 12 increased from **39 040** to **51 787** in 2007. In 2006, Mpumalanga's performance with Bushbuckridge included would have been **60.8%**.

It is important to note that the total number of candidates passing in 2007 is bigger as compared to 2006.

- A total number of **31 449** learners has passed the 2007 Grade 12 examinations as compared to **25 479** who passed in 2006. This represents an increase of **5 970** learners.
- **6 561** (12,7%) of the **51 787** learners presenting six or more subjects obtained university entrance endorsements. This is **1 080** more exemptions compared to 2006. **3 188** (48,6%) of these are female learners, an increase of **522** from 2006.
- A total of **24 888** learners passed the Senior Certificate without endorsement, an increase of **4 890** learners.

Learner performance in gateway subjects still remains a challenge. Though we have increased enrolment in Maths and Science only **2 273** (54,5%) out of **4 172** learners registered passed Mathematics HG and **3 983** (54,9%) learners out of **7 250** passed Physical Science HG.

It is gratifying to note that two regions have improved their pass rate. The pass rates per region are as follows:

- Bushbuckridge: **49,5 %** (an increase of **2,1%**)
- Ehlanzeni: **68,4%** (an increase of **2%**)
- Gert Sibande: **63%** (a decline of **2%**)
- Nkangala: **62,3%** (a decline of **2,2%**)

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a worrying factor that 13 years after the advent of democracy, we still have dysfunctional schools. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. Following the border readjustment process, the Province had **11** schools performing below **20%** in 2006. We have successfully reduced this number to **8**. Such mediocre performance by some of our schools should be frowned upon and challenged by all stakeholders in education.

A number of our learners have distinguished themselves by achieving above average outcomes and I wish to congratulate these learners. A total of **5 521** distinctions has been registered by the class of 2007. *Sithi kini Halala! Siyaziqhenya ngani... ningamaqhawe ethu!*

Programme Director, Ladies and gentlemen, it is disturbing to note that participation and performance in key subjects is still not where we want it to be. It is our belief that nothing is impossible as we can still improve our performance. Most of our learners are not succeeding due to poor performance in the Language of Learning and Teaching which is English Second Language HG for the majority of learners.

This year a total of **10 978** learners did not perform very well in English Second Language as **1 215** learners failed the subject, whilst **9 763** learners had their results converted to a Standard Grade in order to effect a pass.

Ladies and gentlemen, **39,2%** of our learners who sat for the 2007 examinations did not succeed. To these learners I want to say that the future is not bleak as you may think. You can still realize your dreams. In his book, **Secrets of Success**, Marko Saravanja has this to say about planning: “ *When you set goals, they work two ways – you work for them and they work for you.*”

Translate your vision into a business plan. Set goals for the rest of your life - and break them into yearly, monthly and weekly targets. Be disciplined, persevere and monitor your goals continuously – and experience a joy of accomplishing them. Successful people are great strategists and planners. They always plan a few steps ahead, they are pro-active and they plan for risks and contingencies.

They manage the future instead of allowing the future to manage them. Planning is the source of their confidence, direction and strength.

Experience the power of your mind – what you think you become. If nurtured over a period of time, ideas transform into reality. Plan and succeed. Awaken your potential knowing that the power of planning is within you.”

Due to the implementation of the new Curriculum in Grade 12 scheduled to begin in 2008, learners that have failed the grade this year, will not be able to repeat as full-time learners in schools.

However, the Department has arranged a once-off support programme called “**Qed’ibanga**” (finish the Grade) that will enable you to sit your examinations in June 2008. Note that there will be no Supplementary Examinations in March 2008. **38** Centres across the Province have been identified to provide tuition during Saturdays and school holidays. These Centres will be managed by identified principals with a proven track record of good management and performance in their schools.

All learners that have written and failed the 2007 Grade 12 examinations and still need to pursue their studies, can register at these centres from 12th January 2008. Both parents and learners should also note that entries for the June 2008 examinations will close on 31st January, 2008.

In November 2008, the Grade 12 Class will write the National Curriculum Statement Examination for the first time. This signals the closure of the implementation of Outcome-Based Curriculum Framework. To support this implementation and to ensure that our output improves, the Department shall intensify the implementation of the Provincial Learner Attainment Strategy, taking into account this changing policy reality. Our new target line is performance above 60% by schools.

Programme Director, I would like to invite the HOD, Mr Tywakadi, to further clarify these results by presenting a technical analysis of these.

CONCLUSION

Once again, I would like to congratulate all our learners that have made us very proud. I want to extend my appreciation to all officials from the various sections of the Department, our officials in regional offices, Curriculum Implementers and Circuit Managers, educators, principals and parents who have supported the Class of 2007.

Our profound thanks go to all stakeholders for making 2007 a successful academic year. I would like to convey my gratitude to my colleagues in the Executive Council for their support and guidance on issues of education.

The oversight role and advice given by the Portfolio Committee on Culture, Sport & Recreation and Education will always be valued.

Last but not least, let me thank the Honourable Premier for his outstanding stewardship, particularly for ensuring that matters of education are confronted collectively by the Executive Council.

AYIHLOME IFUNDE!