



**education**

DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION  
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

# News Brief

## 30 April 2011



**MPUMALANGA**  
A Pioneering Spirit

# Mpumalanga education department denies it's bankrupt

BY SYDNEY MASINGA  
MBOMBELA

Mpumalanga's education department has denied it is bankrupt and using teachers' pension funds to cover operational costs.

On Wednesday, provincial secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) Walter Hlayise told African Eye News Service that it was public knowledge that the department was bankrupt.

"We know they have a problem with cash flow and they had to borrow money from other departments in the last two months to pay salaries. What disturbs us the most, is the rumours that they are using teachers'

pension funds to cover operational costs. Should these rumours be true, education in this province will be destabilised as we will immediately seek removal of officials in that department. No one will be allowed to mess with pension funds. This is a sensitive subject," said Hlayise.

According to insiders at the department's building, which accommodates the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and Scholar Transport offices along the R40 in Mbombela, there have been power and telephone cuts in the last two months because of unpaid bills.

Hlayise said it was not surprising that the department was failing to settle their accounts.

"As a matter of fact, the



**Education MEC Reginah Mhaule: Her department denies "rumours" that it's bankrupt**

department had no money to print salary advices for teachers in the last three months. I, for one, have not

received my salary advice for February, March and April," added Hlayise.

He said: "Maybe things will be better from this month after the department tabled its R12 billion budget on Tuesday."

Provincial leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA) Anthony Benadie said if the pension fund allegations were true, then heads needed to roll.

"I am sure that using teachers' pension funds to cover operational costs is illegal. The premier of the province, David Mabuza, needs to act decisively with this department. Every year there are negative reports about them. Heads must roll in the department. There are people who are failing to do their jobs," said Benadie.

Department spokesman Jasper Zwane denied the rumours of bankruptcy and abuse of pension funds, saying they were being spread by people who are "hell bound" (sic) on discrediting the department.

"I can go on record to say these rumours are not true. We have not and we will not use teachers' pension fund to cover costs. The department has never been bankrupt. If we were, we would not be able to pay salaries, which has not been the case. As for salary advices, they are being printed. I'm just not sure if they are arriving at schools," said Zwane.

He was unaware of power or telephone cuts at the department's offices and said he would look into the matter.

## Bursaries, loans help open doors to learning for the disadvantaged

**BY ERIC MASHABA**  
MBOMBELA

Orphans and Grade 12 pupils from poor families are being urged to apply for bursaries through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

NSFAS coordinator Dumsane Thwala said the bursaries would be offered to those who want to work for government after completing their university studies.

"These students will not be asked to pay back the fees as long as they serve a period of five years working for government," he said.

"We have heard the plight from orphans and pupils from poor families nationally and their dreams can be a reality," he added.

He said South African citizens studying for their first higher education qualification at a public



**Training officer from the Mpumalanga education department, Dumisane Mandlazi, advises pupils on how to get bursaries.**

university or Further Education and Training (FET) college were eligible for the bursaries.

Thwala said the NSFAS, as a government-funded loan and bursary scheme, provided

access to loans at a low interest rate with reasonable repayment plans.

"Up to 40% of the loan may be converted to a bursary, depending on the student's year end results. That amount

does not need to be repaid," he said.

Thwala said there was an all-expenses paid bursary available for those who want to study certain fields in teaching and social work.

The bursaries cover everything, including accommodation.

"Only once a student completes their studies and begins earning a salary, will they be required to pay back the loan. We will also assist students in searching for jobs. We will look at their careers and will approach relevant companies to see if they can hire our members," he said.

He said once the bursary recipients start working, the NSFAS would send them quarterly statements informing them of their payment terms.

"It will be their responsibility to keep in touch with NSFAS and start making payments

for their loans once they start working," Thwala said.

Closing dates for applications to study and for financial aid is at the end of August of the year before students begin studying.

Training officer at Mpumalanga's education department, Dumisane Mandlazi, said the department had made bursaries available to prospective student teachers.

The bursaries are only available to students from Mpumalanga who are South African citizens and have passed Grade 12 and achieved marks of 60% or more for major subjects.

They may not have received any other bursary for costs covered by the department's bursary scheme.

The deadline for applications is August 31

# School trip tragedy

Sino Majangaza  
and Lulamile Feni

**A SCHOOL sport trip ended in tragedy when a school bus overturned – killing three people and leaving scores injured – in the Transkei at the weekend.**

The accident, which happened just after 8am on Saturday, claimed the lives of two teachers and the bus driver, who died on the scene.

The driver lost control of the bus at the dangerous Nomvalo Cuttings on the R61 road between Lusikisiki and Port St Johns. The bus was ferrying pupils from various schools in Flagstaff and Lusikisiki to district school games in Tsolo.

“It was the most terrible accident to happen in this area over the past few years,” police spokesperson Captain Mduduzi Godlwana said.

The bus and four minibus taxis were driving in convoy destined for Tsolo for the sport games.

Godlwana said a case of culpable

## **KILLER BUS CLAIMS 3 LIVES, LEAVES MANY MORE INJURED**

homicide has been opened with the Lusikisiki police. The injured were rushed to St Elizabeth Hospital in Lusikisiki and St Barnabas Hospital in Libode.

Health Department spokesperson Sizwe Kupelo said all the passengers were taken to hospital. By yesterday most of them had been discharged.

“Nine of them are still in hospital in a stable but critical condition. They still need medical attention,” Kupelo said.

Eyewitness Themba Mathinjwa was driving one of the minibuses behind the killer bus.

“The bus and the other vehicles were not driving fast. But all of a sudden the bus gathered speed and

drove to a wall of the road on the left and overturned on the right and rolled over its roof,” Mathinjwa said.

He said it became chaotic since all the passengers were screaming for help.

“We ran like headless chickens trying to assist the injured. We dragged them out of the bus as fast as we could but ensured that we did not cause more injuries.”

Mathinjwa said: “The bus had fallen over the arms of some passengers. We used a jack from my taxi to try to lift the bus and rescued those whose arms were trapped under the bus. It was a terrible sight.”

Villagers, some armed with

picks and axes, joined in the rescue process and cut away parts of the bus to retrieve the injured.

Mathinjwa said about 30 minutes later traffic officers arrived, then a fire engine and later ambulances.

The trip was called off and all the buses and minibus taxis drove to Lusikisiki Teachers’ Training College, where an impromptu prayer meeting was held.

Education MEC Mandla Makupula said he was on his way to a mass funeral of schoolchildren in Flagstaff when he came across the Saturday accident.

Makupula was going to attend the funeral service of four school children from Mazeni Junior Secondary School who died on May 13

when the minibus they were travelling in overturned.

He said that as part of preventing accidents involving schoolchildren his department would engage with the department of transport to inspect any type of transport to be used by pupils before it went out.

Provincial Arrive Alive spokesperson Tshepo Machaea said the cause of Saturday’s accident was still being investigated.

“It is still not clear what might have caused the accident and an investigation is under way,” he said.

He said in the other accident in which four pupils were killed the driver was found to be drunk.

“That cannot be allowed. The department will now be more hands-on when it comes to vehicles used to transport pupils,” he said.

Machaea said in both accidents there seemed to be carelessness, either on the part of the driver or of the owner of the vehicles.

# PLAN TO IMPROVE TUITION IN SCHOOLS

## Parents to monitor their kids

**Katlego Moeng**

**TEN-YEAR-OLDS** bringing liquor to school, drugs, sex among pupils and bullying are some of the schooling problems that was put in the spotlight when Gauteng MEC for education Barbara Creecy met education facilitators yesterday.

Creecy was receiving feedback from about 525 education facilitators comprising district officials, teachers and NGOs at the launch of the Parental Involvement Programme, which started on Saturday.

She said parents should start taking greater interest in their children's education and social issues at school on a daily basis so that schools, the department and other stakeholders could work together to resolve issues.

"We need to help parents to understand the role of the department in supporting their children," Creecy said.

"We want to share with parents the understanding that the home is the first and primary place of care, support and values.

"We also want to help families understand simple ways to help children do better at school.

"We want to create a platform for parents to have dialogue and we know that serious problems will be raised.

"We are building capacity in the schools safety programme to deal with issues such as domestic violence and, with other departments, to have a referral base.

"We have to deal with these issues because these problems will come into the school environment, affect the pupils and spill over to peer groups," Creecy added.

The safety programme will help the department achieve its goals of having grades 6 and grades 9 scoring at least 60 percent in both mathematics and languages by 2014.

Over the next six months about 525 department of education facilitators will go around 792 of Gauteng's worst performing primary schools and about 792 000 families or caregivers and relatives are targeted in 15 of the province's districts.

Another 391 high schools are targeted, with the focus on grades 10s and 12s.

Parents will have a one-day workshop on how to help their children and how to seek help from schools.

Creecy said there would be follow-up workshops over the next three years.

She said she was working with the Expanded Public Works programme to have matric pupils help facilitate homework classes on school premises.

About 5 000 parents, 50 percent of the department's target, attended the workshops at the weekend. The department will intensify efforts to get more parents attending.



**COMMITMENT:** Gauteng MEC for education Barbara Creecy

PHOTO: MOHAU MOFOKENG

## Facebook to the rescue of orphans

BY MANDLA KHOZA  
KOMATIPOORT

More than 700 children who come from child-headed homes are sporting new uniforms thanks to donations from caring South Africans who learnt, via Facebook, that they were going to school barefoot.

The children, who are among 1 260 pupils at Sekusile Primary School in Mafampisa Section near Naas outside Komatipoort, received full sets of school uniforms from more than 20 different donors who learnt about their plight in the media and through the global social networking site Facebook in March.

"I'm very happy that I finally have my own shoes and school pants and a shirt. I was considering quitting school when I turn 15 to get a job to help my siblings, but now I'm looking forward to going all the way to matric," said Grade 5 pupil, Colbert Sambo, 12.

School principal Esther Nkuna sought help on Facebook and donations of school uniforms, school bags, casual clothing and food parcels started to stream in from different companies and Good Samaritans from across the country since May 16.

The provincial education department has also started building 12 extra classes to ease the congestion.

"If it wasn't for the media



**BEFORE:** Some of the shoes that children from Sekusile Primary School in Mafampisa Section near Naas outside Komatipoort used to wear to school. **AFTER:** The new shoes that children from Sekusile Primary School wear to school.

we wouldn't be celebrating today. I was pleased that even the department of education finally came on board to build 12 classes to reduce overcrowding. Now these kids are beginning to enjoy schooling in an environment that conducive and is bound to produce stars," said Nkuna.

Nkuna said more than 700 of the children at her school lived in child-headed families while others lived with an unemployed parent.

"I turned to the media

because the situation was more than we could bear," she said.

She said the school was a no-fee school, which meant that the children were at least able to get a free meal at school.

"Many parents have more than five children at this school, but they are unemployed. Some of the parents are Mozambicans and their kids don't receive any child grants. I am very thankful to the Good Samaritans who have come to our rescue. Please do not

forget us. This community is in great need," said Nkuna.

Co-founder of Empilweni Financial Services Charmaine Mabuza said giving to the school was part of her company's social responsibility programme.

"Giving to the needy is part of our goal as a company, especially when we give towards education. We believe that giving to the kids will help shape the future of the country," said Mabuza.

Another donor, Amos Zungu, who is employed

in the auditor-general's office in Mbombela, said the children's plight had to come to an end.

"We saw the story in the media and felt that we couldn't pretend we hadn't seen it. Everyone in the office was so touched that we decided to each contribute towards the buying of school uniform. We are happy we did," said Zungu.

School governing body chairman Abel Mahlalela said the education department had previously stalled when it came to providing extra classrooms at the school.

"The overcrowding is bad, but now there is a change after years of stalling. We are also glad to see our kids no longer coming to school in tattered clothes," said Mahlalela.

Department spokesman Jasper Zwane said the department always had the school in mind.

"We have now started with the construction of the classes, which is a demonstration of the department's commitment to bringing a change in the lives of these children. As soon as the classes are done, we will add furniture to the school," said Zwane.

Zwane said the furniture would come from local FET colleges where students were learning how to make furniture.

# Schools to share in pet care

**Landé Willemse**

NELSPRUIT - Local schools are being challenged to collect as many blankets and toys and as much food as possible for the Lowveld SPCA, and the winner will walk off with a cash prize.

Ms Felicity Lange and Hi-Tech Security Nelspruit started a drive in aid of the abandoned animals at the shelters. "One of the reasons we decided to ask Hi-Tech to assist us is that they don't just look after their clients' houses when they are away but also feed their pets," says Lange.

Mr Johnny Kerswill, Hi-Tech boss, confirmed that his company will sponsor R5 000 as the first prize. Lange in her private capacity will sponsor R1 000 for the second and R500 for

the third prizes.

"We invite all the schools in Nelspruit, White River and surrounding areas to take up our challenge and to start collecting food," Lange said. The school that collects the most will win the R5 000 to be used in any way they wish.

Kerswill hoped to create awareness among children to properly look after their pets and other animals.

The competition closes June 13 and from 08:00 that morning the judges will start visiting the participating schools to see how much they have collected. The winners will be announced in *Lowvelder* on June 17.

For enquiries contact Lange on 076-53-22-414 or f.lange56@gmail.com, Estelle de Villiers on 083-664-7505 or Hilet de Klerk on 082-499-0443.

# The Star 14 April 2011 P.07