

MEC'S SPEECH FOR THE NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK
DATE - 31 JULY 2009
VENUE - SASOL CLUB, SECUNDA

Distinguished Guests

Executive Mayor, Councilor Siphon Nkosi

Acting Head of Department, Dr T Ngomane

Lieutenant Colonel Wright

Colonel Mathanda from the South African Air Force

Members of Senior Management present today

Dr Groes

Ladies and Gentlemen

Learners

I am thrilled to address this gathering that aims at turning around the lives of our learners for the better, by making access to higher education a reality for all. One wishes to note that amid all the negativity that befell us; the economic meltdown, the wave of protests for service delivery and the escalating inflation rates. The Department of Education and the Department of Science and Technology are still able to come together and forge a positive direction for the sake of improving the lives of those who are hard hit by the scourge of poverty.

In her remarks yesterday, the Minister of science and technology, Ms Naledi Pandor at the occasion of the launch of the 2009 National Science Week said,

“National Science Week is a celebration of the role that Science, Engineering and Technology play in our lives.

It's an opportunity to excite our youth about Science and Technology. And it's an opportunity to impress upon them their responsibility for future scientific and technological advances in this country.

She further said that, the five years in which we dedicated National Science Week to our youth were meant to encourage young people to aspire to be a part of future scientific and technological advancements that will help us address the socio-economic challenges we face.

Learners don't have to wait until they have passed grade 12 to identify their talent and unleash their potential, and there are plenty of instruments to help them do this.

Indeed, this is not the time to bury our heads in the sand and hope the situation will improve on its own. We are aware that the negative global economic environment will constrain our

ability to accelerate delivery of education as one of the key priorities outlined by the ruling ANC's manifesto.

The National Science Week (NSW) has come at the right time to wear down the pressures that our society is facing and usher in a gleam of hope in the distant future. National Science Week is a collaborative initiative that the Department of Education has with the Department of Science and Technology, aimed at celebrating science.

These celebrations are held throughout the country during the second week of May. However, this year, the second week of May coincided with festivities of ushering the new administration, after the country's National Election.

It is in that spirit that the country is celebrating the National Science Week from the 01 to 08 August. Henceforth these celebrations will be referred back to its rightful date in the month of May.

This year's National Science Week finds expression in the theme; 'Tomorrow's Science and Technology is in our Youth's Hands.'

This theme is apt and relevant given the presence of these young minds in our midst today. This reaffirms our commitment to creating a better future for these children, for we are here to encourage them to take careers in science, engineering and technology. These learners are our future scientists, if they listen and embrace science orientated learning areas; I assure this house that their future is secured.

The President has further urged that we should do our utmost best to encourage all learners to complete their secondary education. I see this initiative as a response to the President's call, by making sure that not only does it promote science, engineering and technology as key learning areas, but also to demystify the misconception that science learning areas are difficult.

The success of the few Science students should have a snowball effect to encourage our present learners not to drop out of school. This country needs geologists, industrial engineers, land surveyors, actuarial scientists, just to name a few.

If the NSW can assist to touch the hearts of the majority of our learners, then I can safely attest that the shortage of technical skills and expertise in the country will be no more. To take this

celebration serious, I wish to encourage one and all to take these celebrations beyond a week, but throughout the year.

The National Science Week has a five year plan that emphasizes our Indigenous Knowledge Systems. In November 2007, Cabinet adopted the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Policy. One of the key drivers of this policy is the role of indigenous knowledge in employment and wealth creation. It is for that reason that the Mpumalanga Department of Education will be using a variety of activities to realize this policy injunction.

The following activities will be common as we celebrate the Science Week; Industrial Visits, Fun Experiments, Maths games such as umrabaraba, Career Pathing Exhibitions, painting, seminars for educators and fun runs just to mention a few.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to emphasize that as Mpumalanga Department of Education, we have been participating in this noble initiative in all the previous National Science Weeks. As we run for the fifth National Science Week Celebration from 1- 8 August 2009, the glory of the week will be as follows;

- The raising of awareness to the public about the importance of Maths, Science and Technology in South Africa.

- Explanation of daily activities such as cooking in scientific terms.
- Demonstration on how science can be made simple and easy.
- Display of technological advancements and innovations.
- Creation of an atmosphere that encourages lifelong learning.
- Collaborative interaction between different stakeholders.

The active involvement of the private sector remains prudent in the attainment of the overall objectives of the National Science Week.

In this regard, I want to extend my profound appreciation to SASOL for the visionary leadership they continue to display in this regard. Your benevolence goes a long way. I am proud to associate myself and the Department with your good selves.

Further acknowledgement goes to:

- South African Weather Services - Ms Munyadziwa Rabambi for organizing workshops for learners
- Mpumalanga Department of Health - Ms Sibongile Mthiyane for organizing the HIV - awareness classes

- South African Air Force (Hoedspruit Air Force Base) - Lt Col Pierrie Wright / Colonel Mathanda for supporting learners on Career Guidance tours to the Air Force Base
- TESS Technology - Mr Maseko for sponsoring Science Practical Work
- Osizweni Science Centre - for Science exhibitions, Dr Rufus Wesi

I am also aware that there are institutions that have adopted our Dinaledi Schools for the enhancement of the teaching of Mathematics and Science.

Industrial Development Corporation: 3-year programme where each of the following school receives MST equipment to the value of R 100,000.00 annually

- EHLANZENI: Mahushe High School and Lihawu Secondary (2008-2010)
- BUSHBUCHRIDGE: Orhovelani and Makhosana Manzini Secondary (2009-2010)

Nokia-Siemens: 2-year programme where the school has been supplied with MST teaching & learning aids to the value of R 150,000.00 annually (2008-2009)

- **NKANGALA**: Ndzundza-Mabhoko Secondary School

Old Mutual - The school will have access to procure MST teaching & learning aids to the value of R 300,000.00 over 3 years. (2008-2010)

- **NKANGALA**: KwaNdebele Science School

Standard Bank - Each school to receive R 50,000.00 voucher to purchase MST teaching & learning aids (2009-2010)

- **EHLANZENI**: Inkomazi High, Lowveld High, Sidlamafa Secondary
- **GERT SIBANDE**: Elangwane Secondary
- **NKANGALA**: Sofunda and Ndzundza-Mabhoko Secondary

DST - Schools to receive MST teaching and learning material, additional educator training workshop and extra learner support contact sessions. (2008-2010)

- **GERT SIBANDE**: Osizweni Secondary
- **NKANGALA**: KwaNdebele Science School

Group 5 Construction - School to receive R 200,000.00 voucher to purchase MST teaching & learning aids over 3 years (2008-2010)

- Bonginsimbi Secondary

Not long the Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza, in his State of the Province Address said, “Education is an important priority area to which this Government intends to pay particular attention over the next five years. As a Province we have an obligation that our education system delivers quality of learner outcomes at all levels. We need to improve learner attainment and instill a culture of quality teaching and learning in all grades.”

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, I wish I could boldly pronounce to the Honourable Premier, that as the Department of Education, we are in pursuit of realizing this strategic goal of making education a societal phenomenon. This National Science Week is but one vehicle of making sure that the public learn the importance of education, so as to encourage their children to embrace it and benefit from the its sweet fruits.

I also wish to encourage every learner today to attend school everyday from Monday to Friday; from the first period to the last period, until the last day of the school calendar. To all of you seated here, please go and encourage your peers to take schooling serious. Make good use of your books, make friends

with your books, indulge in hard work, restrain from negative habits. The future is bright.

Let me quote words of wisdom from Richard De Bury when he says,

“Books are masters who instruct us without rods,
Without words or anger, without bread or money.
If you approach them, they are not asleep;
If you seek them, they do not hide;
If you blunder, they do not scold;
If you are ignorant, they do not laugh at you”.

Enjoy the National Science Week; make the best out of the week.

Thank you.