

Speech by the MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule delivered at the occasion of the Launch of the Laptop Initiative at Sitintile Secondary School on 02 October 2010.

Programme Director: Mr. Daya Goverder

Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane; Head of Department
Members of Senior Management
Mr. H Gondwe; Principal of Sitintile Secondary School
Mr. Solwako Mahlangu; Chairperson of CTU-SADTU
Mr. Jabulani Lumphoko ; CTU Independent Unions
Circuit Managers
Educators
Members of School Management teams
Officials
Ladies and Gentleman

Sanibonani.

I stand before you full of joy and excitement because today we come to witness the launch of the Provincial Laptop Initiative.

This is good news and I will not have a problem if we sing, dance and ululate for this programme has come to fruition.

I am a teacher by profession and have a fair understanding of what it takes to prepare daily lessons. I have practical experience of the challenges that confront our educators to gather information relevant for the enhancement of the teaching process.

There is a saying that goes, "Today is better than yesterday and tomorrow will be better than today"

Indeed, heavens have opened up because we are delivering what matters most for the improvement and delivery of quality education in the Country and the Province in particular.

The Laptop Initiative is an endeavour to improve the knowledge base of our educators and to make them resourceful.

I agree with those who will argue that this launch was long overdue. However I find contentment that it has finally come to life.

What makes me even happier is that this initiative is launched on the week marked by teachers in the province sacrificing their holidays to participate in the Departmental Catch-Up Programme.

I have visited some schools during the week and I was inspired by the level of commitment, courage and dedication.

As a Department, we have done a lot to support our learners and educators alike. To that effect, the Department has implemented with success an intensive Winter School Programme, radio lessons, the Dial a Tutor Programme that is proving to be a success story and our educators are volunteering their services on weekends to improve learner performance.

As we launch this initiative, I wish that educators can see it as government's way of expressing profound appreciation of the good work they do.

We are proud that we have educators who stop at nothing to help our learners to progress and prosper in life.

October is a month where we should encourage the people of the world to value and appreciate the benevolence of educators.

Tuesday will be World Teachers' Day and I take this time to urge our communities to make an effort to express their appreciation for our educators.

We must continue to work side by side with Educators' Unions to reclaim the good image of our educators and the teaching profession.

I am convinced that the conduct we witnessed during the protracted strike in some parts of the country is not a true resemblance of our committed professional educators.

Programme Director, this initiative is focused at improving Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning and aims to ensure that every teacher owns and uses a laptop for the enhancement of the teaching process.

These laptops come with an ICT package consisting of an appropriate hardware and software, as well as, internet connectivity and all with prescribed minimum specifications.

The Laptop Initiative will also serve as a catalyst for the eradication of the digital and technological divide. This is truly so as both the urban and rural educators stand to benefit from this initiative.

Our believe is that even poor communities will be taken on board with regards to quality lesson delivery as much information needed for a well researched and prepared lesson plan will be just a finger tip away.

We are also convinced that this Initiative will largely contribute towards the quality of the teaching and learning process as much as the administration and management of schools. Record keeping and filing will thus not be cumbersome as the Laptop Initiative provides an easy option as opposed to paper records and files.

The 29 231 educators participating in the Laptop Initiative will be required to utilize this facility for their teaching and administration activities.

As much as we are excited about the availability of these laptops and software, we should be equally vigilant about the need to take good care of these tools.

There are a handful of educators who have already received training on computer literacy, including connectivity of email, internet and the use of various software packages. This will continue and will be improved since educators have the tools now.

Technology is an ingredient for us to work smart and to improve requisite skills and with this initiative, teachers will be able to share ideas and learn from each other on the methods they use in their schools to improve the standard of teaching and learning.

The Teacher Laptop Initiative forms part of the cohesive plan by the Department and other stakeholders in education to improve the overall quality of education by making resources available to learners and teachers in the public education sector.

I want to urge all accredited service providers to ensure a seamless implementation of this initiative. Please help our educators with adequate information and support in this regard.

Equally, I take this time to appreciate the pivotal role that the Education Labour Relations Council has played in this regard. The role played by the educators' unions in ensuring that a decision to establish this Initiative will go a long way in the history of education in this country.

As we speak there are only 15 school days left before the start of the 2010 Grade 12 Examinations. I urge you to rally side by side with our learners to ensure that they are fully prepared to write the Examination.

Please join the Public Mobilisation in Support of the Class of 2010 to ensure that we encourage all learners, and in particular Grade 12 learners, so that they can achieve their full potential.

We must do this so that by the time we announce the results on 06 January 2010 ,we know that we have directly and indirectly contributed to that outcome.

Thank you very much to all who have contributed to the success of this initiative.

I formally launch the Mpumalanga Department of Education Laptop initiative for educators.

Thank You.