



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Press Statement

For immediate release

15 February 2010

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MR NAMANE DICKSON
MASEMOLA DURING A MEDIA BRIEFING SESSION AT FUSION BOUTIQUE
HOTEL, POLOKWANE**

Members of the media, welcome and thank you very much for heeding our call when we invited you to this briefing session on the progress made by the Department since the reopening of schools on the 13/01/10.

Education is at the core of the ruling party election manifesto. As a department we have a huge responsibility to ensure that this National project positively fires the imagination of all members of the education community particularly our learners and teachers if we are to succeed in turning our schools into thriving centres of excellence. Our immediate task at hand when the schools reopened was to check their readiness in terms of certain logistical preparations and requirements.

ADMISSIONS

Learner admission in terms of the South African School Act 84 of 1996 must take place at the beginning of August in preparation for the following academic year. This is done to ensure that there is effective learning and teaching on the first day of school reopening.

We are happy to announce that 99% of our schools were engaged in effective teaching and learning on the first day of school reopening on the 13/01/10. Only

few schools were involved in late learner placement. As a Department, we will continue educate our parents not to register their children late as these practice undermine proper planning by our school managers. Our learner population in the province is at 1 570 440.

EDUCATOR PROVISIONING

Educator provisioning for our schools is an important exercise to ensure quality learning and teaching. The Department has extended the contracts of temporary educators until the end of March 2010 to allow the redeployment exercise to be completed. We still have schools experiencing a shortage of Maths, Science, Commerce and Technology. We have contracted 600 Zimbabwean teachers to alleviate the shortage.

LTSM DELIVERIES

All our schools had received their stationery when the schools reopened. 99% of grade 11 textbooks were delivered before day one of school reopening. Annually, the Department provide top-ups textbooks and prescribed books as per schools anticipated additional learner enrolment. Books were ordered for grade 1-3 and 4-6 across the five districts. We are not happy about retrieval system of some schools in the province. It is an area which must be improved because textbooks are expensive and must be returned at the end of the academic year by learners for the benefit of other learners.

CLASSROOM PROVISIONING

In December 2009, 234 schools were damaged by storms which impacted negatively on learning and teaching during the first day of school reopening. To date 63 schools were rehabilitated and the remaining schools will need R67m for their rehabilitation. Classroom backlog which stood at 30 000 in 1994 when the democratic government took over has been drastically reduced to just under 10 000.

Through our Infrastructure unit, mobile classrooms are provided to affected schools as an interim relief before permanent structures are built.

NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

National School Nutrition Programme continues to increase learner attendance and performance in our schools. 218 351 Quintile 1 and 2 secondary schools learners are already benefiting from the programme. We are happy to announce

that Quintile three schools in the new financial year will also benefit from the programme. The challenge we had was that during rainy days, especially in the area of Sekhukhune where Olifants river was overflowing, food supply to schools was difficult and it somewhat disrupted the programme. At this point in time our learners are benefiting because the river has subsided. It is also important to note that more than 5000 food handlers are assisting in meals preparations and are receiving R500 as honoraria.

SCHOLAR TRANSPORT

This area continues to be a constant source of irritation for the Department. The challenge of reliable service providers to render this important service to our learners is another area of concern for the Department. Waterberg and Mopani were the most affected districts in this regard.

We also rely on the Department of Roads and Transport to provide us with the expertise of conducting inspections with regard to road worthiness of the vehicle used.

Furthermore, we had 79 routes out of 259 without service providers. The affected routes were not attractive to our potential service providers because of few learners in those areas. A strategy to merge routes to increase learner intake for our service providers has somewhat yielded positive results. For this ending 2009/10 financial year, a budget of R44, 5m is used to transport 15 000 learners. In the new financial year 2010/11 R100m will be budgeted to transport 19000 learners. Despite the challenges mentioned, 99% of our learners eligible for this service were transported since the schools reopened.

NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL FUNDING

The Department annually allocates funding to ordinary public schools. In the distribution of this funding, schools are classified into quintiles 1-5 and poorest schools receive most funding. Transfer of funds is done in two tranches. The second tranche is not automatically transferred to schools until an audited financial statement is submitted. Only 55 schools with a combined amount of R2,4m are not paid because they failed to submit an audited financial statements. The Department is in constant consultation with the affected schools to comply so that they can get their share within the current financial year. Water and electricity must be paid from Norms and Standards monies. It is important for school principals to budget from this allocation for the payment of these essential services.

It is worth noting that our 914 quintile 3 schools are now No Fee Schools. It means only 202 schools in the province are Fee Paying Schools and a whopping 3 813 schools are No Fee Schools. Our long march to free compulsory education is within reach. Access to education is no longer a preserve of the few.

CONCLUSION

All our plans in the Department are geared towards improving effective learning and teaching. Whatever we do in the department must give support to effective curriculum delivery. I am currently interacting with Grade 12 educators about the state and analyses of our grade 12 results. Together with them, we need a common approach and plans to arrest the downward slide in our results. All things held constant, the programme will be concluded by the end of February. It is generally agreed that if our teachers don't compromise quality contact time with their learners, the performance of learners will definitely improve.

I also want to take this opportunity to wish our 22 500 Grade 12 learners the best of luck in their supplementary examination which starts today the 15/02/10 and will be completed on the 26/03/10.

Through the support of the media, social partners and all relevant stakeholders, we are confident that this National project of turning our schools into thriving centres of quality learning and teaching will succeed. Together with the HOD of the Department, Mr Benny Boshielo, we made it clear to all our employees to perform their work with zeal and determination. Anything less will not be tolerated. It is indeed a year of action.

Once more, let me thank you for coming. It is imperative that we strengthen our partnership if we are to succeed in this project of education renewal and performance in the classroom.

I thank you!