Department of Education strives for excellent marks

The Department of Education recently held a Provincial Education Summit themed “Putting Teaching and Learning at the Centre of all Activities in Polokwane.” The summit was preceded by the similar events in all five districts in April where Education MEC Ishmael Kgetjepe not only addressed but also attended to the end, including commissions.

Addressing the summit Kgetjepe told stakeholders, community leaders and organs of civil society that the department cannot afford to continue to perform poorly when they can improve.

“In 2015, our provincial National Senior Certificate performance declined in all five districts with Waterberg and Sekhukhune registering performances below the national norm of 60%. We declined as a province by 7% from 72.9% in 2014 to 65.9% in 2015. The delivery of quality education is our mandate, is everything to us. It is a curse we are prepared to pioneer and fulfil. We have to toil very hard in laying a solid foundation phase, receptive and favourable learning environment. A viable learning environment in a realistic sense of the word is for our learners to value schools as their only haven for prosperity,” Kgetjepe said.

He continued: “We must do enough in terms of the protection of contact time between teachers and learners. The amount of contact that learners have with their educators as part their learning experience is very important and contributes immensely to learner performance. “We must do so knowing very well that the Premier has not revised the province’s target of 80% pass in matric. That means more hard work on our part to ensure that we deliver on this directive,” Kgetjepe told the delegates.

The summit also offered Foundation Phase practitioners, district managers, circuit managers, advisors, university lecturers, teacher unions and community organisations the platform to engage with a view to offer intervention strategies for improved learner performance in the province.

In the 80% target Kgetjepe stressed that they need to have a plan that will strengthen schools that are characterised by learners and teachers who are highly motivated, principals who are effective managers providing administrative and curriculum leadership, schools that are accountable to parents, consultants and professional teachers who have knowledge of subject they teach. “The delivery of quality education is our mandate, it is everything to us. It is course we are prepared to pioneer and fulfil. We must toil very hard in laying a solid foundation phase, receptive and favourable learning environment. A viable learning environment in a realistic sense of a word for our learners to value schools as their only haven for prosperity,” Kgetjepe said.

He also added that they need to do enough in terms of the protection of contact time between teachers and learners. “The amount of contact that learners have with their educators as part of their learning experience is very important and contributes to learner performance,” Kgetjepe concluded.

Offering a message of support Premier Stan Mathabatha, who was also in attendance, called upon all institutions of higher learning, teacher unions, school governing bodies (SGBs) and learner organisations to contribute towards achieving the 80% matric pass rate. “We have not given up on the target and we can achieve it with the support of everyone. We are still pursuing an 80% pass rate. We will achieve this target with the support of everyone who is here with us today. All of you have a role to play in helping the province to reach this target,” Mathabatha urged.

“Our teacher unions, our SGBs, and learner organisations must contribute something towards this target. Our institutions of higher learning, including the University of Venda, University of Limpopo as well as TVET colleges must also come on board, assist us to find everlasting solutions to our educational challenges. “We must all start acknowledging that the education of our children is a collective responsibility. It is not about the Premier or the MEC, not about the SGB or teacher trade unions, it is about us all,” Mathabatha said.

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All of you have a role to play in helping the province to reach this 80% Matric pass rate,” Mathabatha concluded.

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