



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Keynote Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, delivered at the Release of 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination Results, held at Vodacom Dome, Noordwyk, Midrand

07 January 2019

THEME: “LAST DECADE OF THE NDP 2030 – LET’S GROW SOUTH AFRICA TOGETHER”

Good Evening Fellow South Africans!

Today, we are gathered here to announce the 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results. We are announcing the 2019 NSC examination results in the context of what His Excellency, President Ramaphosa said during the State of Nation Address in June 2019 that –

“As we enter the last decade of the [NDP] Vision 2030, we must define the South Africa we want more clearly, and agree on the concrete actions we need to [undertake as a nation]”.

Fellow South Africans, the National Development Plan directs that “by 2030, South Africans should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learners’ outcomes. The performance of South African learners in international standardised tests should be comparable to the performance of learners from countries at a similar level of development and with similar levels of access”. You will agree with me that our system has been on a steady rise over the past ten years in particular.

Basic Education Sector priorities for the Sixth Administration

Fellow South Africans, the Council of Education Ministers has approved the Sector priorities to lay a ***solid foundation for quality education*** as well as contribute in providing permanent solutions to

the architecture of the education and training system of our country once and for all. These priorities include *inter alia* –

- ✚ improving the ***foundational skills of numeracy and literacy***, which should be underpinned by a ***Reading Revolution***;
- ✚ ramping up ***Early Childhood Development (ECD)***, which includes the urgent implementation of ***two-year of ECD before Grade 1***, and the ***migration of 0-4 year-olds from the Department of Social Development to Department of Basic Education***. The DBE is cooperating with the Departments of Social Development, Health, as well as Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to develop and comprehensive and integrated ***Framework for ECD***, which will be launched soon.
- ✚ the immediate implementation of a ***curriculum with skills and competencies for a changing world in all public schools***, particularly the Three-Stream Curriculum Model, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Entrepreneurship, Schools of Specialisation, Decolonisation of the Curriculum, amongst others;
- ✚ dealing decisively with the ***quality and efficiency*** through the implementation of standardised assessments at various exit points of the system at Grades 3, 6 and 9; and offer the General Education Certificate (GEC) before the Grade 12 exit qualification to direct learners through different pathways; and introduce multiple qualifications and certification;
- ✚ completing an ***Integrated Infrastructure Development Plan*** and the ***Agency***, informed by infrastructure delivery and regular maintenance as well as resourcing;
- ✚ working with Sports and Recreation, Arts and Culture, Health, and South African Police Service to teach and promote ***social cohesion, health, and school safety***; and
- ✚ in line with our commitment towards an ***inclusive education***, and ensuring that no child is left behind, the Sector needs to continue with its work to improve and strengthen education provisions of ***learners with special education needs*** (LSEN).

The 2019 National Senior Certificate Examination Results

On the occasion of releasing the 2019 NSC examination results, we wish to remind Fellow South Africans that we are increasingly prioritising interventions, improvement programmes, and policies that target improved **quality of learning and teaching**; and implementing **accountability systems** to ensure that quality outcomes are achieved right through the basic education system. Given South Africa's divided past, and the continued negative impact of socio-economic realities on learning outcomes, the interventions and improvement programmes we continuously introduce, are an attempt to counteract the unintended negative impact and learning deficits on learner attainment. Our interventions cater for both learners who are at **risk and underperforming**, and learners who are **moderate to high achievers**. This differentiated approach, aims to address both content deficiencies that may prevent learners from achieving good education outcomes; and support moderate to high achievers to improve their performance – thereby improving the **quality of learning outcomes**.

The Class of 2019 was offered targeted support aimed at ensuring that all learners receive maximum opportunities to succeed. The 2019 learner support programmes, encompassed a broad collection of educational strategies, including supplementary materials, vacation classes (during autumn, winter and spring vacations), after-school classes, teacher content, pedagogical and assessment support, mobilising volunteer tutors, as well as alternative and differentiated ways of grouping and teaching learners. Schools also provided learner support programmes to address specific performance results or trends. NGOs, corporates, institutions of higher learning, community groups, and volunteer-based learning programmes, often worked in partnership with schools and provided highly valuable support to our learners – for that we remain grateful.

Umalusi declared that the 2019 NSC examinations as credible

Fellow South Africans, at the outset, I wish to announce that Umalusi *“has approved the release of the 2019 NSC examination results, after successfully conducting the quality assurance of the management and administration of the 2019 NSC examinations”*. Umalusi has

noted with appreciation the evidence-based reports on interventions and improvement strategies implemented by the DBE, and the positive impact the interventions were having on teaching and learning, as well as the overall assessment system. Umalusi declared these as *“an indication of a maturing system, in which expectations regarding curriculum and assessment standards, are becoming more and more entrenched in the system”*.

Having studied all the evidence at hand on the management and conduct of the 2019 NSC examination, Umalusi declared that *“there were no systemic irregularities reported that may have compromised the overall integrity and credibility of the November 2019 NSC examination”*, barring the minor instances of reported irregularities. Umalusi has commended the DBE for *“conducting a successful and credible 2019 NSC examination”*; and noted with appreciation *“the reduced number of irregularities”*. It is gratifying to note that Umalusi has accepted the *raw marks of 70% of the subjects written by the Class of 2019*. This is a sign of a stable system, with the hallmark of our teachers’ efforts to strengthen school-based assessments.

Profile: Class of 2019

The Class of 2019 is the **twelfth cohort** of learners to sit for the National Senior Certificate (NSC), and the **sixth cohort** to be exposed to the CAPS curriculum. Most poignantly, **84.6%** of the Class of 2019, *were part of the 87.7% six year-olds, who were in Grade R in 2007, and entered Grade 1 in 2008 – the same year that the NSC was introduced*. The Class of 2019 is the **second** to be introduced to **12 new subject offerings**, comprising the *South African Sign Language (Home Language)*, written by **97 candidates**; and *Civil Technologies, Mechanical Technologies, and Electrical Technologies – each with three subjects*; as well as *Technical Mathematics and Technical Science*, written by **39 087 candidates**. The Class of 2019 comprised **36.2%** and **31.3%** of female and male candidates, respectively.

The total number of candidates, who registered for the November 2019 NSC examinations was **788 717**, comprising **616 754** full-time candidates; and **170 963** part-time candidates. Of these candidates,

504 303 full-time candidates, and **106 385** part-time candidates actually wrote **all seven subjects** of the 2019 NSC examinations.

Fellow South Africans we always indicate that the scope and size of the 2019 NSC examinations, is the second largest enterprise to the National General Elections in the country. For instance, **147** question papers were set; **8 million** question papers were printed; **7.6 million** scripts were produced and delivered countrywide; **6 872** secure examination centres were established; **65 000** invigilators and **41 000** markers were appointed in **141** secure marking centres.

Performance of the progressed learners

The criteria for learner progression promulgated in 2015, were further streamlined in 2017. In the 2019 NSC examinations, we saw the **second** largest number of progressed learners registering and actually writing the examinations. An analysis of the raw data on progressed learners is contained in the unabridged version of this Speech, available in our website. Of the **34 498** progressed learners, who wrote the requisite **seven subjects** during the 2019 NSC examinations, **23 485** passed; which represents **68.1%** of progressed learners, who wrote **all seven subjects** during the 2019 NSC examinations, and **5.7%** of all learners, who passed the 2019 NSC examinations. **3 912** of the progressed learners, who passed, achieved Bachelor passes; **10 704** obtained Diploma passes; **8 854** obtained Higher Certificate passes; and **13** obtained NSC passes. A total of **2 136** distinctions were attained by progressed learners, including distinctions in critical subjects, such as Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, Mathematics and Physical Science.

The significance of these achievements is that the **23 485** progressed learners, who passed the 2019 NSC examinations – *the would-be-high-school repeaters and dropouts if they were not progressed*, now have a golden opportunity to access either higher education institutions, TVET Colleges, and other skills development institutions. What a story!!

Learners with Special Education Needs

We continue to express appreciation to all our provinces for all the extra support they give to progressed learners to enable them to

achieve as well as they do **learners with special education needs** (LSEN). We strongly believe that an **Inclusive Education system** makes an immense contribution towards an **inclusive economy**, to serve an **inclusive society**. Providing learners with special education needs **access** to quality basic education programmes, is an imperative, based on the Constitutional social justice principles of **equity, inclusivity** and **redress**, among others. We have for the past few years included the learners with special education needs in tracking learner performance in the NSC examinations.

We are happy to announce that **2 576** learners with special education needs wrote the 2019 NSC examinations. **1 281** and **684** of these learners, achieved Bachelor and Diploma passes, respectively. **211** and **79** obtained Higher Certificate and NSC passes, respectively. Learners with special education needs achieved a total of **1 277** distinctions, including distinctions in the critical subjects such as Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, Mathematics and Physical Science.

The benefits of the “pro-poor” policies of Government on the 2019 NSC examination results

The 2019 NSC passes for quintiles 1 to 3 (“no fee”) schools combined, stand at **248 960**. The Bachelor passes achieved by learners in “no fee” schools stand at **96 922** – an increase of **14.4%** from 2018. The poignancy of this increase lies in what research tells us, that in 2005, **60%** of the Bachelor passes, came from the best performing 20% of the schooling system. However, with the **introduction of a pro-poor financing of the education system, in 2015**, “no fee” schools, produced **51%** of the Bachelor passes, which increased to **55%** in 2019. Therefore, the significance of this, is that the gap between the Bachelor passes produced by “no fee” schools versus those produced by fee paying schools has significantly and progressively increased from **2%** in 2015, to **10%** in 2019. This is remarkable indeed!!

Fellow South Africans, whilst from 2015 to date, greater **equity** and **redress** imperatives are systematically addressed, inequalities still remain in the system. Government must however, be applauded for its pro-poor policies, which in the Basic Education arena, alleviate

poverty through a variety of interventions. Among others, it is worth mentioning the pro-poor funding of schools; the provision of nutritious meals on a daily basis; and the provision of scholar transport to deserving learners on daily basis.

These interventions, which are called the “*social wage*” by the Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), have definitely improved **access** and **retention** of learners in schools; thus simultaneously promoting **equity** and **quality** immeasurably. This, is indeed a very encouraging development for our country

Aggregation according to gender

There were **61 744** more girls than boys, who enrolled for the 2019 NSC examinations; and there were **57 579** more girls than boys, who actually wrote the 2019 NSC examinations. Overall, there were **224 906** girls, who passed the 2019 NSC examinations. When translated into percentages, **80.1%** girls, and **82.8%** boys passed the 2019 NSC exams.

There were **103 310** female candidates (an increase of **8.6%** from 2018), who obtained Bachelor passes; while **82 748** of their male counterparts obtained Bachelor passes (an increase of **8.6%** from 2018). Some **76 576** female candidates (an increase of **2.1%** from 2018) obtained Diploma passes; while **68 096** of their male counterparts obtained Diploma passes (an increase of **1.9%** from 2018). **44 946** female candidates (a decline of **7.4%** from 2018), obtained Higher Certificate passes; while **34 038** of their male counterparts obtained Higher Certificate passes (a decline of **10.4%** from 2018). **37** female candidates obtained NSC passes (no change from 2018); while **68** of their male counterparts obtained NSC passes (a decline of **11.7%** from 2018). **37** female candidates obtained endorsed NSC passes; while **50** of their male counterparts obtained endorsed NSC passes.

Therefore, there are **39 950** (an increase of **8.2%** from 2018) more female candidates who achieved Bachelor, Diploma, and Higher Certificates passes than their male counterparts – an increase of **10.1%** from 2018; meaning that there are more female candidates, who are eligible for studies at higher education institutions.

63.8% of the **156 884** distinctions, were attained by female candidates; while their male counterparts attained **36.2%** distinctions. These distinctions include passes with distinction in critical subjects such as Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, Mathematics, and Physical Science. This means that we are systematically address all imperatives related to the social justice principles, especially **equity** and **redress**.

District level performance

The NDP recognises *districts as a crucial interface of the Basic Education Sector in identifying best practice, sharing information, and providing support to schools*. The continued growth in the performance of districts, is closely monitored and evaluated by both the provincial and national Basic Education departments. In 2019 NSC examinations –

- ✚ **none** of the 75 districts attained pass rates lower than **60%**;
- ✚ **six** (6) districts (**1** in the Eastern Cape, and **5** in Limpopo) performed at **60% and 69.9%**;
- ✚ **24** districts (**10** in the Eastern Cape, **5** in KwaZulu-Natal, **2** in Limpopo, **2** in Mpumalanga, **4** in the Northern Cape, and **1** in the Western Cape) performed between **70% and 79%**; and
- ✚ it is noteworthy that **45** districts (**1** in the Eastern Cape, all **5** districts in the Free State, all **15** districts in Gauteng, **7** in KwaZulu-Natal, **3** in Limpopo, **2** in Mpumalanga, **4** in the North West, **1** in the Northern Cape, and **7** in the Western Cape), performed at **80% and above**.

The top **ten (10)** district level performances in the country in the ascending order, are –

- ✚ Tenth, is Johannesburg West in Gauteng, with **88.7%**;
- ✚ Ninth, is Ekurhuleni North in Gauteng, with **88.8%**;
- ✚ Eighth, is Xhariep in the Free State, with **88.9%**;
- ✚ Tied at sixth, are Sedibeng East in Gauteng and Bojanala Platinum in the North West, with **89.6%**;
- ✚ Fifth, is Namaqua in the Northern Cape, with **89.9%**;
- ✚ Fourth, is Fezile Dabi in the Free State, with **90.3%**;

- ✚ Third, is Tshwane North in Gauteng, with **90.6%**;
- ✚ Second, is Gauteng North in Gauteng, with **90.7%**; and
- ✚ First, is Tshwane South in Gauteng, with **93.3%**

Fellow South Africans, in 2019 NSC examination results, we are noting **four** (4) provinces occupying the **top ten** performing districts in the country. More impressively, **six** (6) of the **top ten** performing districts, performed **above 85%**; while **four** (4) performed beyond the **90%** glass ceiling. Notably, out of the **top ten** performing districts in the country, **six** (6) are from Gauteng, and **two** are from the Free State; **one each** from the North West and the Northern Cape – this is definitely no mean feat!!!

The top district level performances in the respective provinces, are as follows –

- ✚ In the Eastern Cape, the leading district is Nelson Mandela at **81.4%**;
- ✚ In the Free State, the leading district is Fezile Dabi at **90.3%**;
- ✚ in Gauteng, it is Tshwane South at **93.3%**;
- ✚ Ugu is the leading district in KwaZulu-Natal, with **86.3%**;
- ✚ Vhembe East is the leading district in Limpopo, with **81.5%**;
- ✚ Ehlanzeni is the leading district in Mpumalanga, with **84.6%**;
- ✚ Namaqua is the leading district in the Northern Cape, with **89.9%**;
- ✚ In the North West, the leading district is Bojanala Platinum with **89.6%**; and
- ✚ In the Western Cape, the Metro North is the leading district, with **86.3%**.

Provincial level performance

Fellow South Africans, the 2019 NSC examination results on the one hand, show that with or without the progressed learners, **none of the Provinces** achieved **lower than the 70% pass rate**. On the other hand, the 2019 NSC examination results achieved by the provinces **with progressed learners included** (the actual 2019 NSC exam results), are as follows –

- ✚ The Free State is the leading province at **88.4%**, an improvement of **0.9%** from 2018;

- ✚ Gauteng achieved at **87.2%**, a **0.7%** decline from 2018
- ✚ North West achieved at **86.8%**, an improvement of **5.6%** from 2018;
- ✚ Western Cape achieved at **82.3%**, a **0.8%** improvement from 2018;
- ✚ KwaZulu-Natal achieved at **81.3%**, an improvement of **5.1%** from 2018;
- ✚ Mpumalanga achieved at **80.3%**, a **1.4%** improvement from 2018;
- ✚ Eastern Cape and Northern Cape are tied at seventh, both standing at **76.5%**. Eastern Cape had a whopping improvement of **5.9%**, making them the most improved province; and Northern Cape improved by **3.2%** from 2018; and
- ✚ Limpopo achieved at **73.2%**, an improvement of **3.8%** from 2018.

We wish to commend *Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, North West, Free State* and *Gauteng* for maintaining their **80% performance status**; and we must particularly applaud the *Free State* for reclaiming the top spot from Gauteng. We also wish to applaud the *Eastern Cape, North West* and *KwaZulu-Natal* for the highest improvements in the 2019 NSC examinations.

Overall national performance

This brings us to the overall results of the 2019 NSC examination. For the *past ten years*, we have noted that the NSC pass rate has consistently been going up from **60%** in 2009 to above **70%** pass rates in recent years. The Class of 2019 must be commended for maintaining this trend. The 2019 NSC overall pass rate, **with the progressed learners included**, stands at a new record of **81.3%** – a **3.1%** improvement from the 78.2% achieved in 2018. This, represents a record of **409 906** candidates, who have passed the 2019 NSC examinations. However, **with the progressed learners excluded**, the 2019 NSC overall pass rate stands at **82.3%** – a **2.9%** improvement from the 79.4% achieved in 2018. Well done to the Class of 2019!!!

Further analysis of the 2019 NSC examination results, **with the progressed learners included**, show that –

- ✚ the number of candidates qualifying for admission to Bachelor studies is **186 058** – an improvement of **8%** from 2018; which represents **36.9%** of the total number of candidates, who wrote the 2019 NSC examinations. By the way, the 2019 Bachelor passes in number and percentage, are the highest attained in the entire history of the NSC examinations;
- ✚ the number of candidates, who passed with a Diploma is **144 672** – an increase of **2%** from 2018; which represents **28.7%** of the total number of candidates, who wrote the 2019 NSC examinations;
- ✚ the number of candidates, who passed with Higher Certificates is **78 984** – a decline of **9.1%** from 2018; which represents **15.7%** of the total number of candidates, who wrote the 2019 NSC examinations;
- ✚ the number of candidates, who passed with a National Senior Certificate (NSC) is **105** – an increase of **6%** from 2018; which represents **0.02%** of total number of candidates, who wrote the 2019 NSC examinations; and
- ✚ the number of candidates, who passed with an endorsed NSC is **87**, which represents **0.02%** of candidates, who wrote the 2019 NSC examinations.

It is important to note that a total of **330 730** candidates (equivalent to **65.6%**), who achieved Bachelor and Diploma passes, are eligible for studies at higher education institutions. The **78 984** candidates, and equivalent to **15.7%**, who obtained certificate passes, may register at TVET and other skills training institutions.

Just between 2008 and 2019, the basic education system has produced a total of about **1.763 million** Bachelor passes. In order for us to meet the skills demands projected by the NDP, as a country, it may be necessary to track the whereabouts of these young people, and check on their current skills and employability profiles.

In 2019, a total of **156 884** distinctions were achieved. The main contributors towards passes with distinctions, were KwaZulu-Natal with **41 910**; Gauteng with **37 422**; Western Cape with **24 704**; Eastern Cape with **15 745**; and Limpopo with **13 312**. It is remarkable to note that the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo – the three most rural provinces in the country, produced a combined total of **70 967** distinctions, which is equivalent to **45.2%**. In the 12 key subjects (including Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, Mathematics, and Physical Science among others), the total number of distinctions stands at **60 870** – an improvement of **3.5%** from 2018.

The largest contributor of Bachelor passes is KwaZulu-Natal with **44 189**; but when translated into percentage Bachelor passes, Gauteng leads with **44.5%**. Similarly, KwaZulu-Natal were the highest contributors of passes with distinction at **41 910**; but when translated into percentage passes with distinction, the Western Cape leads with **6.79%**. Equally important, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo and Eastern Cape are the backbone of any NSC examination, as these provinces register the highest numbers of candidates, who actually write the examinations. Therefore, any NSC overall national performance to be meritorious, the output of these four provinces must be quantitative and qualitative.

Conclusion

Fellow South Africans in conclusion, there is no doubt that the system is beginning to reach the desired stability, which is healthy for a large system, as large and important as ours. The public system in South Africa continues to enjoy the confidence of our people; and thus, we have to give our best at all times. South Africans continue to send about **96%** of about 12.8 million of the country's children to our public schools; and according to Umalusi, the 2019 NSC exams coordinated by the DBE, accounted for **98%** of the **803 035** candidates, who sat for the 2019 NSC exams in the country (including the IEB and SACAI candidates).

It is a very important milestone for a system as diverse, large and challenging to have surpassed the **80%** glass ceiling – the first time in the history of our country. This is a humbling, heart-warming and also an encouraging achievement. To maintain, or even go higher

than this pass mark, will be definitely be a tall order. The focus, as encapsulated in our Sector priorities, will be about the *consolidation of ECD; ramping the performance in all the four phases of our schooling system; continuing to improve the architecture of the education and training system; working with all our partners to usher in a Skills Revolution through the Three-Stream Curriculum Model and the Fourth Industrial Revolution amongst others; and strengthening the assessment regime in all four phases of the system.*

Fellow South African it has been many years that the performance of the system for the NSC examinations, has exclusively been based of the overall pass rate. We have come up and have been piloting the ***inclusive basket of criteria***, which will use variables over and above overall pass numbers and percentages, including but not limited to *participation and success rate in Mathematics, Physical Science, Accounting, Economics, and Business Studies subjects; number and percentage attained in Bachelors and distinctions; the number and pass rate of progressed learners; as well as the secondary throughput rates.* This will not only contribute to evaluate the extent to which we are achieving the imperatives of the NDP, but will also determine the value of the investment that Government and taxpayers make available to the Basic Education Sector.

Once again, I wish to congratulate the Class of 2019, and wish them the best in their future. I believe that the Class of 2019 will continue to shine wherever they are. In celebrating the Class of 2019, I must also thank the principals, teachers, and parents for the work they continue to do. Schools are at the coalface of Basic Education delivery. What you do at the school level, is what matters the most. The future of our learners, and the prosperity and further development of our nation, is in your hands. We applaud you for the great work you continue to do on a daily basis.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Oversight Committees (the Portfolio and Select Committees responsible for Basic Education), the Deputy Minister Dr Reginah Mhaule, the MECs and the respective Heads of Departments for their stewardship, leadership and continued support. I must thank the Director-General and his team of officials for their continued work and support. Some

of the officials had to forfeit their holidays and worked right through the Christmas vacation, in order to ensure that the announcement of the 2019 NSC exam results proceeds without glitches.

Lastly, but certainly not the least, I wish to thank our partners – teacher unions, governing body associations, our business partners working directly with us or through the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), the NECT itself, our statutory bodies – Umalusi and SACE, researchers whose work we cannot do without, our sister departments, South Africans, who together with us have made the stability and the improvement of the Basic Education Sector their responsibility. We also wish to thank the Vodacom for hosting us this year. Let me end by saying, the Governing Party was definitely correct in declaring education a societal matter. Therefore, all hands must be on deck.

I thank you.